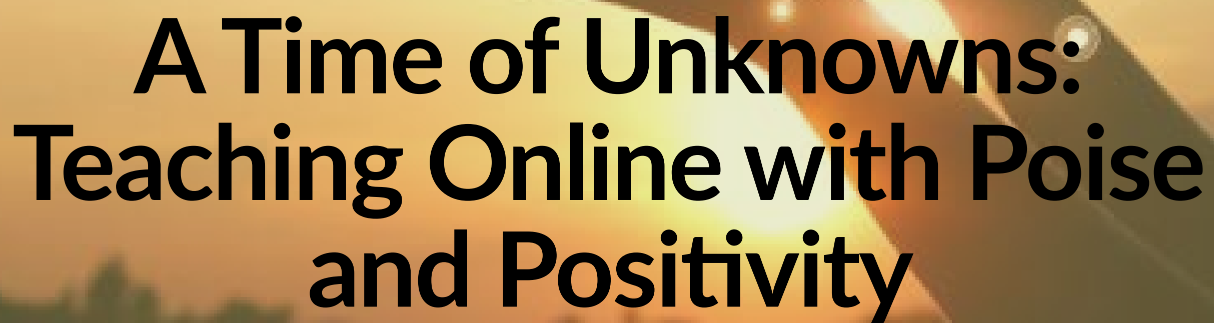

A Time of Unknowns: Teaching Online with Poise and Positivity

SPECIAL REPORT: ONLINE TEACHING STRATEGIES

MAGNA PUBLICATIONS

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A Memo to Students as the New Semester Begins

Maryellen Weimer, PhD

This is just a brief note to let you know how committed I am to making this a good course. But I can't do my best teaching without your help. So, I thought I'd share a list of things you can do that will make this a better experience for all of us.

Be there. When you're in class or online doing course-related work, I need you to be there completely. Yes, this means being physically present, but I'm hoping for more than just your body in class. I teach better when you are mentally present—listening, taking notes, mulling things over in your head, asking questions, occasionally nodding (when you understand), and sometimes looking surprised, confused, or amused (as the situation warrants). And yes, you may even look bored, if that's how you're feeling. I need that feedback, too. What I don't need—and find very discouraging—is having you in class but not really there. Don't kid yourself: I know when students are doing things with their devices or finishing homework for another class, looking up every now and then and pretending to listen. Trust me, feigning attention doesn't look anything like attentive listening. You'll make the course easier for me to teach and you to learn if you are present and engaged in what's happening in class.

Participate! Yes, I do give points for participation, even though I know that encourages some students to contribute solely to earn them. There's no need to speak every day. Less is sometimes more. Speak when you've got something to say! Ask a thoughtful question, share a relevant experience, respond to another student's comment, or voice a different perspective—contributions like these make the class interesting for me and everyone else. And thanks in advance to those of you who voluntarily participate.

"Ask a thoughtful question, share a relevant experience, respond to another student's comment, or voice a different perspective—contributions like these make the class interesting..."

I know many students find it difficult to contribute in class. I try to make it easier by broadly defining participation. If you've got a question about the reading, something I said in class, or an observation that a classmate offered, and you couldn't quite find the courage to raise your hand, send your question or contribution to me electronically. You also can participate by posting on the

course website. Maybe it will be a list of the three most important things you learned in class on a given day, a short paragraph that summarizes the discussion that ended class, or a set of study questions for an upcoming exam.

And everyone can participate in this course by listening and paying attention—especially when another student is speaking. Good listeners respond nonverbally with eye contact and facial expressions. They don't look close to comatose.

A class that's participating energizes my teaching. Your comments, questions, and responses feed me. Without your participation, I feel like I'm at a dinner table where all I do is serve the food and never get to eat it. I'd like to be sharing the meal with you instead.

Help me get to know you. Let's start with names. I am committed to learning yours and do hope you'll learn mine. Almost everybody struggles with names, including me. If I speak to you without using your name, call me on it. If I've forgotten, give me something that will help me remember. Let's greet each other by name when we run into each other on campus. Stop by my office. I keep a basket of granola bars for hungry students. I know they're not as good as candy, but they're healthier. See, we've found some common ground already.

I'd like to get to know you beyond just your name. What's your major? Why did you decide on it? What courses are you taking? Tell me something you just learned in one of your other classes. Why are you in this course? I know; it's required. I think it's required for a compelling set of reasons, but I'm probably not all that objective. What would like to learn in this course? What are you finding easy and difficult about this content?

I teach better when I know the students I see in class or chat with online as real people—students with names, faces, and interesting lives. I do my best teaching when I have students who care about learning (and grades); who have dreams, goals, and ambitions; and who want to get out there and fix what's broken. I do my best teaching when I have students who are serious about getting ready for life—or getting ready to make a better life. I want you to experience my best teaching, and I hope you'll help me make that happen this semester.

Note to readers: Be welcome to make this note your own. Use it as a template. Delete or revise what doesn't fit, add more sections or examples, and change the voice so that it sounds like you and aligns with the things you like to see from your students.

A Reflection on the Sudden Transition: Ideas to Make Your Synchronous Online Classes More Fun

Siva priya Santhanam, PhD

The transition to online teaching has been partially, if not completely, challenging for faculty teaching in colleges and universities. I am writing this article while reflecting on my own experiences since March 16, 2020, when our university made the decision to move to online teaching. Online teaching is not new to me; I have spent a great deal of time and effort learning and understanding best practices in online education, and I think I do a decent—if not stellar—job at it. But the speedy transition to online format has shifted my focus from student engagement and fostering the joy of learning together to "content delivery." I have experienced a sense of rush and inadequacy, and I feel a need to hide my fears and challenges with this online transition from my students.

When this online transition was announced, I had only two requests of my students: I asked them to please be patient with me as I figured out this change, and please trust me in this process. I have noticed that students have been extremely flexible, understanding, forgiving, and even sweet and supportive during this process. Although they have more at stake, in terms of grades and graduation and additional concerns with housing, family commitments, and jobs, they have been my biggest support system. However, my biggest challenge has been limited engagement in online synchronous classes. Even students who are typically talkative and engaged in face-to-face classes, do not engage as much in an online format. I use a hybrid approach—part of my class is asynchronous and part of it is synchronous online.

Although they [students] have more at stake, in terms of grades and graduation and additional concerns...they have been my biggest support system.

For the asynchronous portion, I post lecture notes/discussion notes ahead of time on the course LMS (Learning Management

System), and I record myself explaining concepts/terminologies based on the notes. I use free screencasting apps such as Yuja, Screencast-o-matic, or Loom for this purpose. Students can see me and my computer's screen in these recordings. I also hyperlink recordings in the notes that I post for students. Students can read the notes on their device and watch the recordings before they meet with me synchronously online.

I use synchronous time for reviews and discussions. I avoid lecturing during this time, and use several activities to clarify questions and confusions, provide feedback, and create discussion opportunities. I feel as if we, as educators, should build a relationship with our students online even if we have previously established a relationship in face-to-face classes. We want students to become more comfortable with this novel format, and trust us and the work we do.

Here are some ideas/activities that I have been using to shed light on my synchronous online classes, while fostering a fun environment. I basically put on my clinician hat as I began compiling these ideas. In some ways, I see similarities between online teaching and teletherapy. I do not know if these ideas are evidence-based, and I certainly do not know yet if these are appreciated by my students, but I do look forward to reading those student evaluations at the end of this semester more than ever before. If you are new to online teaching or a pro at it, I hope at least one of these ideas sparks interest for you.

Fun Activities for Online Classes

1. We play a "**This/That" game**. It is really silly, but both the students and I have fun with it, or at least I do. For example, I start the game with the first student who volunteers. "Do you like Semantics/Pragmatics? Why?" "Would you like to be the Broca's area/Wernicke's area? Why?" "Would you like to have a conversation with a toddler/a preschooler? How?" Then each student calls out a peer's name and asks them a similar question. We make sure that everyone gets a turn.

2. We play "**Two truths and a lie**." For example, I start with the first student. "Intentional communication emerges around 8-9 months. Joint attention emerges around 6 – 10 months of age. Inflectional morphemes are mastered by age 3." The student has to select which one of these statements is a lie. And then, I give the students a checklist that they can use to ask the next person another "Two truths and a lie" question.

3. Another game we play is called "**Circle of questions**." One student starts with a question. For example, "What is decontextualized language?" The next student then responds and asks a question to the person that she / he tags. The next question needs to be in some way related to the first question. For example, it can be related to decontextualized language or language development in preschoolers. All students get a chance to ask and respond.

4. We play a "**Tell your Grandma" / "Teach your Grandpa"** game. I post questions ahead of time. If there are 10 students, I post 10 questions. Each student picks a question and spends about two minutes preparing an answer. I then pretend to be the grandma or grandpa, and I ask a question pretending to not know anything about it. For example, I say, "What exactly is phonological awareness?" And then I annoy them by saying, "Really? I can't understand that. Could you tell me what a phoneme is first? Why would a child need phonological awareness? What does it have to do with reading?" etc. So, I spend about five minutes with each student doing this.

5. Another game is called "**Emoji Slides**." This is a great game to play before exams. I have a set of pre-made slides. Each slide displays a concept or a word or a question. I share my screen and present one slide at a time. Students have to respond by reacting to the word/concept/question on the slide with an emoji – Happy, Sad, or Neutral. If I see a happy emoji from all students, I move on to presenting the next slide. If a few students respond with a sad or neutral emoji, I stop and explain the concept or give examples, and then ask them to react with an emoji again. If the emoji is now happy, we move ahead. Students can also create their own slides, share their screen, tag a person, and ask them to react.

6. Another game we play is "**Who am I?**" For example, I say, "I am a part of the cochlea that separates the scala media and the scala tympani. Who am I?" "I acquired two languages at the same time before the age of 3.Who am I?"

7. We do **online role plays**. For example, one student volunteers, and we practice asking questions as part of a case history while I pretend to be the caregiver and the student takes the role of a speech-language pathologist. We then reverse roles. We also role play to practice counseling. I provide a list of case-based scenarios that all students can look at. I read each scenario aloud, and students take turns to counsel me while I play the role of the client.

8. For review of concepts, we use **collaborative worksheets**. We use this activity every time we meet online as students like the structure and repetition of this activity. I post a worksheet with several questions (multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true/false, explain a term, give an example, compare two concepts, etc.). Students can then open this worksheet on their Microsoft Teams browser and start typing answers to these questions. Students can see each other's responses, and I can see both their names and their responses. They get immediate synchronous feedback. I respond next to their responses with a happy emoji if their answer is correct. If their answers seem vague or incorrect, I edit it online while everyone else can see my edits. You can do this activity with Google Docs if you are not using Microsoft Teams.

9. Finally, we use **short 15-minute quizzes** during the synchronous class time. I create quizzes using Microsoft Forms because it is compatible with Teams. These quizzes are not part of the course grade; they are merely used for practice. Students can complete the quiz on their individual devices during class time, and I can review their responses, where they can get immediate feedback. You can create these on your course LMS, use Google Forms, or simply read a question out loud and have students respond in the chat screen or shout out the answers.

Transforming Your Lectures into Online Videos

John Orlando, PhD

When I was asked to create an online course 20 years ago, I simply transcribed my face-to-face lectures into 10–15 page Word documents that I posted in our LMS. Don't ask me how my students managed to get through them.

I was making the mistake that is made with nearly all new technologies—looking at them through the lens of the old way of doing things. It usually takes many years of experience before people learn about the unique principles that govern the new technology and how to use it effectively. For online courses, this usually means creating videos to replace the traditional face-to-face lecture.

While this is an improvement over text, most faculty create an online video by just adding narration to the PowerPoint they use in their lectures. Once again, they are thinking in the old paradigm by reading pages of mind-numbing bullet points as if their students were illiterate. Visuals are not for projecting your detailed notes—they are for amplifying the message with images that provide an emotional emphasis and visual analogue to the concept. The imagery makes the abstract concepts easier to understand and remember.

Why do we love TED Talks? Partly because they do not allow bullet points. Similarly, the movie March of the Penguins was not two hours of Morgan Freeman reading bullet points to viewers. When the subject was how penguins transfer eggs from father to mother, the viewer saw a video of penguins transferring eggs. It's as simple as that. The imagery strengthens the message, unlike bullet points that only obscure the message because the viewer does not know whether to read the bullet points or listen to the narration. Good imagery also adds emotion to the message. Everyone who saw March of the Penguins remembers the image of the frozen egg that took too long to transfer. As a result, people remembered the process. In other words, they learned, which is the whole point of teaching.

Faculty who are asked to teach online need to be guided through the process of reconceptualizing their face-to-face lecture to an effective video-based format. Here are a few simple rules to help:

Find a theme

Too often faculty go into the course development process with the "content coverage" mentality where the focus is on touching all the necessary topics. This leads to passing information to students without context, as if they are transferring information between databases. But while computers can record reams of information with accuracy, the human mind cannot. The human mind is built to remember significance, and so the first rule

of teaching is that "only significance matters." That is, any information needs to be conveyed in terms of its significance.

Thus, the first job of a faculty member is to identify the significance in the information. That should lead to a single theme in each video. March of the Penguins was built around the theme of the hardships that penguins face in living and reproducing. Similarly, my own video on the history of medical ethics was developed around the theme of the profession transforming itself from a "doctor's orders" view to one that respects patient autonomy. The theme connected all the various examples I used. Only covering the various seminal cases would not have helped students learn the concept nearly as well. But running a thread through the cases allows students to more easily draw up the information.

Videos can include statistics and factual information, just as March of the Penguins mentioned the number of penguins that gather for the mating season. But nobody remembers that number. People only remember its significance—that it was large—which was of course amplified by images of seas of penguins. That significance is what the viewer will take away, and so all information should be presented in terms of its significance.

A good example of this transformation process is the video "Jefferson and the Constitution: NOT Love at First Sight" by Tom Richey (https://youtu.be/p4uOPBFHRMA). While many history professors might teach about the U.S. Constitution by simply going through the various components (i.e. covering content), Richey crafts the lesson as a love story between Thomas Jefferson and the Constitution. He tells the story of how Jefferson's good friend James Madison sent a draft of the Constitution to Jefferson in Paris. Madison expected Jefferson to be just as enamored with the document as he was. But Jefferson had a mixed reaction to it, and the narrative draws the viewer into the story of why Jefferson was lukewarm and what he thought was missing. By the end of the seven-minute video, viewers have a far deeper understanding of the various elements of the Constitution and why they are there than they would have received from just a description of the elements alone.

Start by motivating the lesson

Whether delivered through an in-person presentation or a video, if the content does not grab the viewer's attention within the first 90 seconds the speaker has lost the audience. A common mistake people make is to begin with an overview of topics to be covered, which will be forgotten as soon as it leaves the speaker's mouth. Again, TED Talks are a good model. Instead of an overview, they always begin with an attention grabber, such as "We are on the cusp of the greatest technological advance in history" or "Education is broken." These openings pique the viewer's interest and make them want to hear more.

While faculty might at first wonder how they can capture a student's curiosity with their material, they should ask why they themselves find the material interesting. A civil engineering instructor teaching bridge design might see that the significance of the material is that poor design can lead to disaster, and so might start with a video of the famous Tacoma Narrows bridge collapse. In a video I created for my medical ethics course on the legal definition of death, I started with a real story of doctors using the wrong standard of death and declaring patients dead who were not legally dead. A psychology instructor might open by asking students a question about human behavior that has a counterintuitive answer. Only after grabbing the students' attention

should the instructor begin the lesson.

Find the images that will resonate with students

Once an instructor has a theme and the significance of each part of the lesson in terms of that theme, he or she can record the narration and add images to it. This is the part I enjoy the most. I like looking for striking images that will capture students' attention. Too often people default to bland stock photos of good-looking business people smiling at the camera. Those are not meaningful and only recede into the background like wallpaper. The eye is attracted to novelty, and images should be something that pop out at the viewer. When I create slides, I might illustrate the concept of isolation by showing the image of an astronaut floating in space. When I go over my bio and mention I am from Wisconsin, I include a cow as the image.

Faculty should not try to create something that looks like slick marketing because marketing only turns us off. The whole point is to create memorable material that the student will retain, and so anything that does that is perfectly acceptable no matter how goofy or strange.

There are a number of good places to find images licensed for educational use. These, along with the technical process for combining images and narration to create an educational video can be found in "Digital Storytelling for Enhanced Learning" from the May 2016 issue of Online Classroom. But it all begins with understanding how to rethink face-to-face teaching visuals and transform them into content that makes best use of the online medium as its own unique communication forum.

When the Tide Goes Out: Identifying and Supporting Struggling Students in Online Courses

Marie A. Revak, PhD

Students in online courses start with the best intentions—keeping up with the readings and assignments, engaging in discussion, and learning from their instructor's feedback and comments. Once an online course begins, students can quickly become overwhelmed to the point where they are treading water in an attempt to stay afloat. It is only when the first grades are posted that the tide goes out and students realize they are in danger. This is where instructors can easily identify the students who are not succeeding. What can instructors do to support these struggling students?

The Online Learner

Students in online courses are unlike traditional students in many ways. Online learners are typically older and busier with work and family obligations than students on traditional college campuses (Roddy, Amiet, Chung, Holt, Shaw, McKenzie, Garivaldis, Lodge, & Mundy, 2017; Thistoll & Yates, 2016). To add to these challenges, online courses are often accelerated and demand a heavy workload and a set of technological skills (Roddy et al., 2017). In many ways, distance learning reverses traditional teacher/student roles and students are responsible for planning, organizing, and directing their own learning (Thistoll & Yates, 2016; Fetzner, 2013). Students must also manage the complex mixture of the learning management system (LMS), the internet, course materials, and their own electronic devices (Beins, 2017).

> *What can instructors do to identify and support struggling online learners who are being swept up in the tide?*

An online learner who procrastinates may experience technical difficulties, can become confused by course content, or may feel isolated and become unmotivated to meet course requirements (Roddy et al., 2017). As a result of these issues, online students have lower retention rates (Fetzner, 2013) and fail to complete courses at a higher rate than traditional students (Schroeder-Moreno, 2010).

The Online Teacher

Instructors who teach online courses also face unique challenges. Online instructors are tasked with delivering course content, helping students navigate the technology, engaging students in discussion, monitoring student progress, encouraging perseverance, providing timely and detailed feedback, and fostering interaction between students (Chen, Pedersen, & Murphy, 2011; Roddy et al., 2017; Watson, Castano, & Ferdinand-James, 2017; Zweig & Stafford, 2016). Online instructors must be flexible, responsive, and committed to engaging and retaining their students (Roddy, et al., 2017). Instructors must also update courses regularly to ensure that they remain relevant and interesting (Schroeder-Moreno, 2010).

The very nature of online learning places additional demands on both students and instructors. What can instructors do to identify and support struggling online learners who are being swept up in the tide? Consider implementing the following practices in your own online courses:

1. Implement Early Check-Ups

Think about the first time you taught an online course and consider the steepness of the learning curve. In addition to the LMS, many online courses require proficiency in additional technology tools and programs. Each course has its own rhythm, which may include discussions, homework, papers, projects, quizzes, and exams, and some students stumble early in the course. Many students assume that online courses will be easier than traditional face-to-face courses or underestimate the technological and organizational skills and the time commitment required to be successful (Fetzner, 2013; Schroeder-Moreno, 2010). Many students experience information overload when beginning an online course (Chen et al., 2011).

For these reasons, you should share expectations with students by phone or e-mail before the class begins (Thistoll & Yates,

2016). Within the course, include detailed instructions for accessing all course materials, auxiliary resources, and support services, and encourage students to ask you and each other for help. As a check to ensure that students can navigate the LMS and supplemental materials, have students post screen shots. A short multiple-choice quiz is also a good way to ensure that students can access the course procedures and policies.

According to Fetzner (2013), almost 20% of unsuccessful students claim they got behind and could not catch up. For this reason, monitoring student progress and addressing early signs of distress is a priority (Roddy et al., 2017).

2. Communicate Clearly and Frequently

Although online courses provide little to no opportunity for face-to-face interaction (Chang, Hurst, & McLean, 2015; Roddy et al., 2017), the typical online environment is equipped with areas for announcements, and private and group discussions. Indeed, these asynchronous forms of communication may actually benefit introverted learners who need time to synthesize their thoughts before responding (Self, Fudge, & Hall, 2018). Timely and clear communication about course expectations, requirements, and due dates is imperative (Roddy et al., 2017). Consider posting a master schedule that consolidates all due dates in one place. Because students identify redundant information as an obstacle to learning (Chen, Pedersen, and Murphy, 2011), point students to original postings in the LMS rather than repeating information. Chang et al., (2015) report that students are more satisfied with the course when instructors encourage frequent communication.

3. Encourage Engagement and Build Community

We all want our students to engage in our online courses, preferably through higher order learning such as applying the content to real world problems or situations, or sharing diverse opinions and forming personal perspectives (Buelow, Barry, & Rich, 2018). Buelow, Barry, and Rich (2018) report that students enjoy thought-provoking questions posed by the instructor, hearing the positions of their peers, and sharing their own perceptions. When a student posts generic, trivial, or redundant information in a discussion, gently remind them that peer responses are expected to move the conversation forward. Encourage students to improve their discussion posts by commenting on something specific about a classmate's post, supplying an example from research or their own personal experience, or asking follow-up questions.

Self, Fudge, and Hall (2018) report that students who procrastinate with discussions tend to interact less and are often less successful academically. Students who are not engaging in the course may not understand the LMS, so reach out to the student's advisor or to the student using e-mail, phone, or text messages. Encourage students to get involved early in the week by posting optional discussion items that appeal to a variety of learners. To build community within the course, Beins (2017) recommends using humor, first names, and pronouns such as "we" or "us." Addressing the course as "team" also reminds students to work together toward the common goal of successfully completing the course.

4. Provide Scaffolding

An important role of instructors is to determine the right balance of scaffolding. If learners are highly motivated, possess a range of cognitive strategies, and have prior knowledge of the content, Dabbaugh (2003) recommends a low level of scaffolding. Higher

levels of scaffolding are recommended for learners who lack prior knowledge and have high anxiety or low motivation (Dabbaugh, 2003). Too little scaffolding often leads to frustration, anxiety, and loss of motivation (Dabbaugh, 2003). Types of scaffolding include indexes, glossaries, formula sheets, templates, scoring rubrics, and samples for projects and papers, and short videos to supplement background knowledge. Instructors can also scaffold individual assignments by requiring outlines or rough drafts. Because finding the right balance for scaffolding is a shared responsibility and requires input from students, ask students to identify the level and type of scaffolding they need.

5. Be Flexible with Deadlines

How do you determine which students are permitted to submit work late? Some universities request faculty leniency to those affected by natural disasters, while students facing issues such as illness, injuries, family emergencies, and technology glitches are not given such leniency. A grade of zero on a high-stakes assignment may discourage students from completing further work (Wyre, 2019). When strict due dates are enforced, some students will turn in high quality work but receive lower grades due to lateness while other will receive higher grades for lower quality work that is submitted on time. Wyre (2019) states that denying a student the opportunity to submit an assignment denies them the opportunity to learn. Similarly, Cutler (2019) argues that the goal should be mastery, and some individuals may need more time to achieve mastery. Thomas (2019) reports that when the pressure of a due date is alleviated and students are permitted to complete an assignment, the work is often better.

6. Allow "Re-Dos"

Student disappointment over a bad grade can fuel a feeling of futility. Allowing students to re-do assignments extends the learning window and allows students to use specific, corrective feedback to improve their work and their grades. Cutler (2019) allows retakes as a way of acknowledging that occasional slip ups should not get in the way of learning. Because the goal is improvement, Cutler (2019) allows any student who did not perform at their best the opportunity to re-do an assignment. Another option is to grant a small window of amnesty, allowing students to re-do one or more assignments to improve their grade. With amnesty, students must communicate with the instructor and make the extra effort to re-do an assignment. Some instructors average the original and the improved grade to encourage responsibility and discourage overuse of the re-do policy.

The nature of online learning is unique with strong demands on both students and instructors. By implementing early check-ups, communicating clearly and frequently, encouraging engagement, building community, providing support and scaffolding, being flexible with deadlines, and allowing re-dos, we are better able to identify struggling students early on and put them on the path to success, regardless of the tide.

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Solutions to Online Discussion Problems

John Orlando, PhD

Student discussions have long been both thorn and rose of online courses. When online learning was first introduced to academia, skeptical face-to-face instructors believed that the courses must lack any discussion, likening them to a television broadcast. But online educators immediately recognized that the format allowed for more and deeper discussion than face-to-face courses. Online, students have unlimited think-time to craft responses, there is no time limit on discussions, and discussions often bring students who are afraid of public speaking out of their shells. Finally, students can speak to each other as well

as to the instructor.

Despite these benefits, many online faculty have found that students provide shallow, formulaic responses or repeat one another's comments in different words. Faculty have also found that just like in face-to-face courses, participation is uneven, with a handful of students dominating discussion. Many students consider online discussions an exercise in filling air time with perfunctory comments meant to satisfy the grading rubric.

So what happened to the promise of online discussions? I believe they still have great potential to meet the benefits stated above, but faculty need more training in how to set them up to cultivate robust and creative discussion. Below I explore some of the causes of online discussion problems and provide a solution for each.

Discussion questions

Almost without exception, I see faculty new to online teaching mistaking discussion questions with essay questions. Faculty are used to writing essay questions but not discussion questions, and so they end up writing discussion questions that are just shorter versions of essay questions. The result is questions that require students to interpret and critique a particular article or author's position or explain a concept.

A dead giveaway to this confusion is expecting students to provide citations in their postings. We don't expect the people we are having lunch with to cite the sources of all of their comments. If you to make a factual claim that does not sound right to me, I might ask for your source, but I don't require two sources from all of your comments.

Faculty who give students mini-essay questions for discussion invite formulaic responses and repetition. There are only so many ways to explain the same concept. Instead of asking students to sketch out another person's arguments or critique them with outside sources, faculty should ask questions that students can answer using only their prior knowledge and own reasoning. Plus, they should invite controversy and admit a variety of competing positions.

Consider the following two online discussion questions on the same topic:

1. What is Smith's argument for why physicians must always be honest with patients, no matter the cost? What are two critiques of the argument? What is your position and why?

2. An older woman is having a hysterectomy when the surgeon nicks an artery and she begins to bleed. The surgeon instructs a nurse to give her blood while he prepares to repair the damage, at which point the nurse says, "She is a Jehovah's Witness and strictly forbade getting any blood." The surgeon says "She's not dying on my table, give her blood!," which the nurse does. Afterward, should the care team tell the woman that she got blood?

The first is the kind of mini-essay question that cause students to groan. The first person

to respond will use up all reasonable answers, leaving everyone else to come up with new ways to agree.

The second, by contrast, is a question that anyone can answer with their prior knowledge and reasoning. Plus, it is an inherently interesting question that motivates participation. As the discussion grows, the instructor can point out the underlying principles students are using to resolve the case, which creates the teaching moment. Shifting mini-essay questions to scenario-based discussion questions radically changes the quality of discussion.

Small groups

Most online courses set use a single discussion forum for the entire class. But real-life discussion more often happens in small groups, and people are generally more comfortable speaking in small groups than in large ones. Ask a live class of 30 students a question, and you might get a response from those two or three students who always speak up. But put them into groups of four, and you get everyone speaking. For this reason, instead of putting all students into the same discussion forum, set up multiple discussion forums with small groups in each to see whether doing so generates more participation and genuine sharing of ideas than stock responses just meant to satisfy the grading system. You might also try using different discussion questions for each forum to see which generate the most engagement, then pick the best for future courses.

Grading

Faculty often quash discussion by the method they use to grade it. They typically incentivize participation with grades based on individual contributions, such as requiring one original contribution and at least one reply for each discussion question, and usually grade participation by quantity. But as Alexis Wiggins (2020) notes, this approach can reward bad behavior, such as monopolizing discussion or contributing only superficially to it. At the very least, the approach encourages quantity over quality.

Wiggins suggests instead using a group grade for discussions. Now, the general student objection to group grades is that the better contributors will suffer from being averaged with the worse ones. But here Wiggins offers an important twist: the group grade should be based on the quality of collaboration. When we grade students individually in discussions, we are really creating competition between them, rather than collaboration. But if we are attempting to teach discussion skills for life, then the point should be to encourage a good group, rather than individual, outcome. After all, the real point of group discussions in organizations is to reach the best possible decision. The discussion of O-ring problems before the Challenger launch was a failure not because of how many people contributed but because of the decision at the end. Moreover, fostering a sense of collaboration between group members helps sustain the enthusiasm and comradery of groups, which is also critical to individuals functioning together in organizations.

Thus, Wiggins asserts that students should be taught to not only contribute themselves but also encourage others to weigh in. Wiggins facilitates this collaboration with a grading rubric that includes criteria such as whether everyone has participated in a substantive way and whether the discussion has genuinely progressed toward new understandings. That creates an incentive for ensuring that others contribute. A student might see that a

classmate has not contributed and so specifically ask for their thoughts, just as a good leader would do in a live meeting. Students are also encouraged to pick up and further develop others' ideas as well as provide summarizing comments that represent the new understandings developed in the discussion. These rules not only improve discussion within the class but also help students improve their discussion skills for the real world.

Discussion is still an important part of online courses but had gotten a bad rap due to poor setup. Try these methods in your course to enliven online discussions.

Like the Phoenix: Finding New Life in an Online Course

Mary Hoeft

It was Friday, March 12, 2020—the end of a long week of "What Ifs." What if Covid-19 spreads across the U.S.? What if our university closes? What if our international students are stranded?

I was in my office when a colleague poked his head inside to ask if I had read our Chancellor's email. He had just extended spring break to April 3, giving faculty three weeks to design and place courses online.

I am far from a newcomer to higher education. As professor emeritus of communication arts, I have been at this gig for 49 years and have never shied away from a challenge. I wasn't about to now.

I have designed and taught multiple distance education courses but only one online course—an interdisciplinary mix of Irish literature and small group discussion. With the clock ticking, I was faced with the challenge of creating two online public speaking courses that met, and hopefully surpassed, the expectations of students I had come to know well. Several of my students worked full-time jobs. Others were high school seniors enrolled in their first-ever university course. Many lived in small towns with limited access to high speed internet.

As I planned lectures, I tried to break my course down to the bare essentials. What did students absolutely have to know about Aristotle's principals of ethos, pathos, and logos? Did I even have to include mythos? Of course I did. What about concession statements? Could I forgo that lecture? Absolutely not.

When it came to a final count, I was up to 26 lectures. Too many? Not if I made those lectures stimulating. I could do that, couldn't I?

For the controversial speech, my lecture included an emotional "extended example" of the time I spanked my two-year old grandson when he ran out into the street—and the guilt that followed, fearing I had damaged him for life. That video must have captured the attention of students because several chose to speak about whether or not parents who spank their children scar them emotionally (My grandson, Rockton, is eight now and, as far as I can tell, emotionally unscarred).

Before recording lectures, I scouted out

filming locations in my home. I recorded several videos in front of an Impressionist painting of cellists that I had purchased from one of my students. I recorded another series in front of a retired colleague's depiction of the university's Japanese Garden. I recorded the remaining videos in front of a painting my grandmother had passed down to my mother and my mother to me.

If students' minds wandered as they listened to lectures, they could focus on my artwork—but not too much.

Last week, I awarded extra credit to a student who turned the camera on his dog...

Having read as much literature as possible about effective online teaching, I knew my videos needed to be as concise as I could possibly make them. My longest video was 10 minutes. My shortest was four minutes.

On April 6, courses went live. On the HOME page of Canvas, students were able to download one packet of handouts for each remaining speech. Those packets contained exercises that students and I would normally have worked on together in class. There were articles about Native Americans—some who were offended when sports teams used their names and others who were honored. There were articles about marijuana—gateway drug or not? Students were asked to identify and outline the strongest expert testimony on each side.

But how was I going to get students to do those exercises? I wasn't going to ask them to submit outlines to the dropbox for me to grade. It was going to be enough work listening to 120 speeches.

I decided on the following strategy—I would pause during lectures and say, "STOP! If you haven't finished the marijuana outline, pause the video and do the assignment now. Then come back. This lecture will be so much more meaningful!" I worried that my strategy might not work, but it was the best I could come up with on short notice.

Under ASSIGNMENTS, students found four videos to prepare them for the informative speech that was due April 12—six days after the course went live. It was a speech that students had been working on for weeks before class had abruptly ended. There were 10 videos to prepare students for their controversial speech, and 12 videos to prepare them for their final persuasive speech.

Instead of posting their final speeches on Canvas, the learning management platform my university uses, I gave students directions for posting on YouTube. My colleague Joel convinced me that YouTube was a social media platform that students would be more comfortable using. Then, as soon as I evaluate a speech, usually within 20 minutes of receiving it via email, the student is free to delete it.

During a pandemic, I didn't feel as though I could require students to gather an audience to listen to their speeches, but I did certainly try to entice them (while encouraging social distancing of course—you can listen to a speech six feet away). I offer extra credit for any audience they can muster. Before speeches begin, students scan the recording eye of their laptop over smiling faces of moms and dads, restless siblings, and doting grandparents. Last week, I awarded extra credit to a student who turned the camera on his dog.

With only two weeks remaining in the

semester, I am proud to say my students have risen to the online challenge.   Of the 41 students enrolled in my two courses, 37 have an active online presence. I email my four "ghost" students regularly, and I check with student services for information on their whereabouts.

Until yesterday, I had no luck locating my "ghost" students, but minutes after sending an imploring email, one of my students responded, asking for help. Seconds ago, as I was typing the preceding sentence in this article, the bottom right hand corner of my computer lit up with the name "Steven" (name changed); Ghost student #2 had reappeared.

Students are in frequent contact with me, asking questions and seeking help. Emails arrive throughout the day, but most often, in the wee hours of the morning. In those emails, students share stories of loved ones who have passed, siblings they care for while parents work, computers that have died, and speeches that refuse to upload.

I send daily announcements to my students, letting them know I care and will do whatever I can to help them succeed. In the midst of this pandemic, I am awed by their success. Like the Phoenix, my students appear to have found new life in their online public speaking course.

Keep Calm and Redesign with Perspective

Bridget Arend, PhD

Sometimes we are asked to step during an emergency situation when a colleague cannot finish teaching a course. Sometimes enrollment or structural changes mean we are unexpectedly assigned to take on a new course just days before the semester starts. And sometimes, beyond our wildest imaginations, a pandemic causes us to reformat our on-campus courses for online delivery overnight.

All these options are far from ideal. As someone who regularly helps faculty thoughtfully redesign their courses, I know that quality course design takes time. Ideally, we want any redesign process to involve rethinking assumptions, developing a clear sense of overall goals, considering internal and external expectations, and tinkering (sometimes excessively) with content, resources, assignments, and instructional activities. A thorough course redesign is best completed when you have carved out some time and space for fresh thinking. But what do we do without the luxury of time?

If you're currently teaching a course that needs to be retooled, restructured, or redesigned midstream, here are a few things to keep your expectations realistic and your sanity intact.

Focus on long-term goals

In an unexpected course redesign situation, many questions are going to emerge before you have the time to think them through. Can students complete alternative assign-

ments? What if a student misses an essential component of the course? What if your final exam or class presentations need to occur online? At this point we can borrow some lessons from the established course design models, such as integrated course design (Fink, 2013) and backward design processes (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). It is immensely valuable to have a clear mental picture of our end goal.

While we may be tempted to start planning what needs to happen tomorrow, taking even just 20 minutes to breathe, step back, and write out the long-term goals for student learning can help us make the right decisions in the short term. What do you hope that students will carry with them long after completing this course? What impact do you want this course—or the current situation—to have on their lives? These are not small questions, but the clearer our intentions and purposes are from the outset, the easier it will be to make those "in the moment" decisions.

Remember that less is more

The benefits of "depth over breadth" approaches to teaching provide value for any course but are especially important when the time frame changes. We may have to face the reality that we simply cannot do everything we want to do in the course and that trying to "get it all in" may actually do more harm than good. Instead, take solace in the value of going deeper in learning—perhaps less reading, less content, and more focus on connections, reflection, and application. Carefully consider what is essential to accomplishing those long-term goals, what could be left out, and ultimately where you want your students to focus their limited time and energy.

Involve the students

Students can be incredibly supportive and understanding when given the chance. If they know you are doing your best and have their long-term interests at heart, they are often very willing to work with you. Share your long-term goals with them and discuss your planned changes. What if they tried to write the course learning outcomes, in their own words and in ways that make sense given their situations, or even create their own learning plans? Discuss why what they learn in this class matters—or better yet, ask them to make this connection themselves. Why not ask for their suggestions at how best to achieve the learning goals? They may uncover some creative options or find their own technology solutions. You don't have to adopt every idea, but they may come up with some great options, and you'll gain valuable student buy-in through the process.

Give yourself a break

These are far from ideal situations, and no one can expect perfection. We may even make mistakes—add in too many activities, focus on the wrong resources, or set up a new project that fails. These are mistakes to learn from! Yes, if we had more time, we could do some truly wonderful things. But we can also appreciate the small steps we've taken

to support meaningful learning. Be patient, and be kind and gracious to yourself and your students. Keep your eyes on those long-term goals, and celebrate small achievements along the way!

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Fourteen Simple Strategies to Reduce Cheating on Online Examinations

Stephanie Smith Budhai, PhD

The end of the academic term often brings final examinations and cumulative assessments to test students' knowledge of course materials. With 30% of college students taking online courses (Allen & Segman, 2017), and that number expeditiously increasing, so will the need for administering exams within the online learning environment. Many instructors are hesitant to include exams within their online courses because of the potential of compromising academic integrity. Virtual live proctoring technologies but may be too expensive and not part of the instructor's institution's distance education infrastructure. Additionally, having students take exams under the eye of an online proctor may negatively impact student success on the exam (Lieberman, 2018). Even without expensive virtual proctoring tools, there are many ways that instructors can leverage the inherent features within their institution's Learning Management System (LMS) to decrease cheating during online examinations. Here are 14 ways to do so:

1. Create questions that require higher order thinking. Instead of having students respond to questions that can be answered by a simple web search or even by finding the answers in their textbooks, create questions that are on the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation levels (Bloom, 1956). It will be more challenging to ask a friend or "Google" the answer when the questions require students to explain, analyze, infer, create, compose, evaluate, and authentically demonstrate their mastery of course content.

2. Use varied question types. Refrain from having an exam with all multiple choice or true and false questions and include open-ended questions. It is more difficult for students to give the same response as their friends verbatim for open-ended questions, and students would be forced to explain their responses using specific details and supporting narratives that are unique to their own understanding of the course materials.

3. Creatively remind students of academic integrity policies. Create and post a video explaining the guidelines for the online exam and review the institution's academic integrity policy and consequences that are listed in the course syllabus. There may be some psychological impact on students after seeing and hearing their instructor discuss academic integrity right before an exam begins, which may deter students who were thinking about cheating.

4. Require students to sign an academic integrity contract. After reviewing the academic integrity reminder video, have students electronically sign a contract that lists what the university considers cheating. Include a link to the university website that houses the academic integrity policy and require a signed contract prior to beginning the exam. Use a free tool within the LMS, such as a polling or survey feature, to execute the contract, or you can have the students sign, scan, and upload the contract as an assignment prior to the exam.

5. Restrict testing window. Similar to how on-campus final exams have a designated testing slot for each course, create the same online. Have every student start the exam around the same time and limit how long each student will have to take the exam. If you have students in different time zones, consider offering three sets of tests, at three different start times. Even though the online exam will be "open book" by default—since there is no one watching the students take the exam—it is important to provide just enough time that a student who knows the information would have the appropriate amount of time to be successful on the exam, and not too much time for students who have not prepared for the exam to search for the answers. Be sure to create individual, extended timing settings for students who are approved for testing accommodations.

6. Set-up the exam to show one question at a time. To avoid students quickly looking over all of the test questions and having multiple tabs open to research answers to questions, or even having family and friends responsible for a certain set of questions, choose the test setting that only allows one question to appear on the screen at a time.

7. Prohibit backtracking. Require students to focus solely on one question at a time, answer it with a final answer, and then move to the next question. Prohibiting backtracking can reduce students from using extra time at the end of the test to try to locate the correct answer and force them to answer the question to the best of their already learned knowledge.

8. Change test question sequence. In the test settings, have the order of test questions be different for each exam along with the order of answer choices for each test question. Students are tech savvy and may attempt to employ screen sharing technologies in an effort to take the exam at the same time as their classmates and share answers.

9. Offer different versions of the same test. This was mentioned above in using different sets of tests for students in different time zones, but in general, it is recommended to have many different versions of the same test so that in the event that students are taking the test in the same physical space, it will be less likely for them to have all of the same questions.

10. Allow for only taking the test once. There is typically not a chance to retake an on-campus final exam, and the same practice should be followed for exams that are taken online.

11. Plan for "technical issues." Offer a practice exam with a few questions, not

pertaining to the actual test, that would provide students with the chance to become familiar with the online testing features. This will also avoid future issues with students who are not familiar with the online exam technology. Also, engage the test settings to automatically end the exam when the student exits or if the time runs out. This way, if a student says their computer crashed, you can go into the exam and see the questions they already answered, and if you choose to allow them to complete the exam, they can begin where they stopped and continue with the amount of time they had remaining.

12. Delay score availability. Set a later date after the testing window ends for students to see their score and feedback and do not make the score available for immediate view after test completion. This way, one student who finishes early cannot see their score and then advise students who have not completed the test yet. Depending on your LMS, you may have to hide a column in the grade center for students not to see their scores and test questions.

13. Refrain from using publisher test banks verbatim. It is convenient to have access to complementary test banks that come with course textbooks; however, students may be able to get access to those textbooks when they are housed online, including the answer keys. Think about using the questions as inspiration and changing them up enough that the students would not realize it was the same question asked in a different way. You can also change how the answer choices are worded.

14. Protect test question answers. If students request to review their exam, only show them the questions they answered incorrectly. This will limit students from being able to copy and download all of the exam questions for the next group of students who take your course.

The ways in which instructors have to go about designing online assessments may be different than they would be in the traditional bricks and mortar classroom (Fontanillas, Carbonell, & Catasús, 2016), regardless, instructors can use some of the ideas above to better safeguard their online exams and maintain academic integrity, while also being able to appropriately assess their students' overall course learning.

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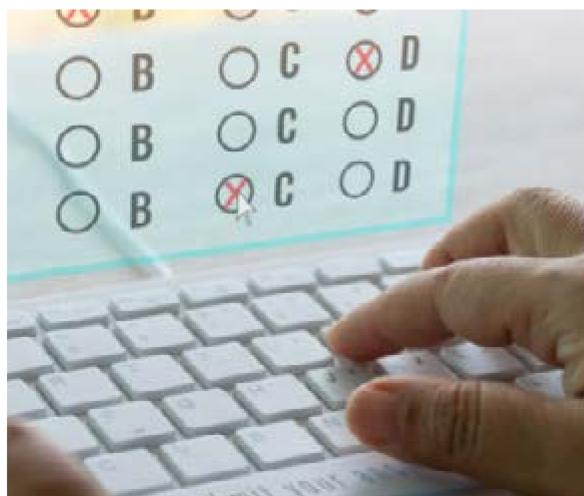

Teaching in Troubling Times

Maryellen Weimer, PhD

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we deal with closed campuses and everything going online, we find ourselves teaching in the face of an array of circumstances that make learning difficult. The undercurrents of the unknown run deep. There are our own health concerns and those of the ones we love. There are financial worries. Will there be food in the grocery stores? How do we avoid getting on each other's nerves here at home? How long will this last? And finally, how do we teach when minds and hearts are a thousand places other than learning?

> *The undercurrents of the unknown run deep. How do we teach when minds and hearts are a thousand places other than learning?*

We can help students focus by providing the leadership that they've come to expect from us. Although we may feel inches from chaos, we do know how to teach, and we understand how students learn. That doesn't mean we ignore or downplay the challenges, but what's happening in the course—that's our bailiwick. Calm, steady leadership quiets panic and conveys confidence that we'll figure it out together.

Teaching under a new set of circumstances requires flexibility—the ability to respond to events on the fly. It's not a time for rigid standards and fixed policies or for clinging to how things have always been done. At this point, most of us have cobbled together a plan for what's going to happen in the course, but it's a work in progress and will evolve as circumstances change. We've unexpectedly been jolted off course, but we are still on the road and committed to doing what it takes to move the course forward.

Along with the uncertainty of the situation comes an opportunity to be with our students in different and deeper ways. Helping these students become a community of learners may be easier than it's been in any other course. As challenges emerge, we can talk about them! We can ask students to describe how problems look from their perspective and encourage them to share ideas, solutions, and other options. There's no need for social distancing with remote teaching. In fact, it's a case for a close relationship with the teacher and students working together in the face of shared struggles.

It's not always bad for students to see teachers struggling with the details. My colleague Lolita was telling me stories the other day about her first attempts with a synchronous online session—and she's an experienced online instructor. She was ready for her second set of PowerPoints, but where were they? She clicked on icons and moved from screen to screen—her face registering the disgust, frustration, and embarrassment she felt, forgetting that 40 students were looking on. With no PowerPoints, she had to give up and end the session early, but with poise and

grit in her voice she announced that she would find them and do better next class session. I'll bet students identified with her, comforted by the fact it's a trying time for everyone.

The gift teachers most need to give themselves right now is space for a less-than-best performance. Frustrating teaching experiences are filled with potential for learning—for the teacher, yes, but also for the students who get to see how a pro builds mistakes into a better performance. Instructors need to occupy that space with humility but also with confidence. We are master learners who know that mistakes are powerful teachers.

Teaching in troubling times opens up learning possibilities beyond those the course provides. In compelling ways, we are making sense of our priorities and seeing more clearly what really matters. Life is possible with fewer than 24 rolls stashed in the bathroom. We are experiencing emptiness without our communities—and grubby fullness with too much family. But the absence and closeness of those most meaningful to us awakens the frightful possibility of losing any of them. This is life on the edge with lessons ready for learning. All that's missing is a teacher.

Taking Your Classes Online in a Flash

John Orlando, PhD

Most higher education institutions have put their classes online for the remainder of the term. Higher education is well positioned to take classes online because so much of teaching in higher education is lecture driven rather than reliant on one-on-one interactions as in the K–12 realm. Additionally, nearly all schools already have a learning management system (LMS) on hand. Here are some tips for moving classes online in a flash.

Use video conferencing to lecture, but mix up your delivery

Most institutions will use the LMS they already have to move classes online. Instructional designers will work with you to move the assessments, quizzes, and other resources into the courses. Your biggest job will be creating the lectures.

The easiest method of putting lectures online is with live video conferencing. Nearly all LMSs have built-in video conferencing ability, and if it is not available on your school's particular LMS, you can use Zoom, WebEx, or Google Hangouts. The free version of Zoom has some limitations that make it less than ideal for faculty, such as a 40-minute limit on meeting length, so I would use it only if your institution provides a premium version. Cisco is making WebEx free to any school and even provides guides for faculty and students on how to use it. Hangouts is another excellent free alternative that is entirely browser based and rarely has compatibility issues with student or faculty computers. Students merely need a URL and

can log on at the same time as the faculty member.

It is important to keep in mind that online teaching is generally not live, and broadcasting yourself by webcam or your notes by PowerPoint is not the best means of delivering content online. The format is used here only due to the time constraints of a rapid transition. Real online teaching involves content developed for a web format, such as the digital storytelling model of narration combined with imagery and videos, much like a documentary or the better YouTube educational content.

But given a lack of time to create real online content, broadcasting yourself speaking is your best option. What should these lectures contain? You may be tempted to simply speak to a webcam the entire time. If you use PowerPoint in your regular lectures, you may want to broadcast your slides while you speak. Either will work in a pinch, but neither is ideal. Nobody wants to watch a talking head for more than a few minutes, and "death by bullet point" limits an audience's attention to about five minutes at most.

Instead, consider interspersing outside resources such as YouTube videos or TED Talks into your lectures every five to 10 minutes. My motto: "If someone can say it better than you, then let them." Faculty teaching face-to-face assume that they need to create all of the educational content themselves, but online faculty know that there is a world of exceptional content out there waiting to be used. This is an opportunity to expose traditional faculty to that content, which they might end up using in their face-to-face classes next term.

Putting lectures online is trickier in quantitative fields that require instructors to work through equations. For these courses, one option is set up a camera in a classroom and record yourself speaking in front of the blackboard if your school is still open, though it might be hard to find an audiovisual person with the time to record you. A better option, if available, is to ask your institution for a tablet or touchscreen laptop that you can draw on and screencast during your lectures using Zoom, Google Hangouts, or Screencast-O-Matic or borrow one from somebody else.

Try Google Classroom

If your institution is one of the few that lacks an LMS or for some reason cannot support all the classes moving online, consider using Google Classroom. Google Classroom is a simple yet powerful and free LMS that allows instructors to set up a class in less than a minute. Additionally, it integrates with Google's wide array of programs, platforms, and services, including Gmail, YouTube, Drive, Hangouts, Stream, and Docs. Not only are these excellent apps in themselves, but most people are already familiar with them. Google has even set up a page with a variety of resources on how to put up a class on Google Classroom. Find out more here.

Make sure to interact

Online learning presents the option of a live or recorded lecture. While online courses are often asynchronous, the time required to make asynchronous content makes that option prohibitive. But there is also an opportunity here for live interaction with online students who, unlike in traditional online courses, signed up for the course knowing that they needed to be available during a given time slot. Plus, you can record your live broadcasts for anyone who misses them or for future use.

Interactivity will be critical as content alone is rarely rich enough to keep an audience's attention. Thus, it is a good idea to pause every five to 10 minutes for an interaction. Breaking up a lecture is also critical for retention because people sporadically need pauses to engage new information to move it from their working memory to their long-term memory. You can also intersperse these interactions with videos. Thus, try talking for five minutes, showing a video, talking for another five minutes, doing an interaction, and so on.

A simple interaction is to ask the class a question and solicit answers either via the chat function in video conferencing software or by audio. Just make sure to tell students to mute themselves when they are not speaking to avoid a cacophony of noises. A better option, however, is to use an audience response system to prime the pump with questions that invite responses from all students at the same time. Poll Everywhere allows you to incorporate polls into PowerPoint slides so that you do not need to change systems to run it. Kahoot! is a more feature-rich system, but if you are using a PowerPoint you will need to switch back and forth between applications to run it. This is where having dual monitors or running two computers at once is helpful as the audience response system will be running outside of the video conferencing system. Have the audience response system running on the other computer or monitor and set up the questions ahead of time. Then swing over to activate a question and have students answer on their smartphones.

Real or hypothetical scenarios are ideal for opinion questions. Here is one I use in my medical ethics class:

An elderly man needs a kidney transplant, and his daughter is tested for a match. As his care provider you find out that she is not a match because she is not actually his daughter. Do you tell the man that she is not his daughter? Do you tell the daughter?

After presenting your prompt, you might start by asking students submit a simple yes or no to gauge where they stand. Make sure to screencast the results. People love watching the graph columns move around as responses come in, and this will get students interested in defending their positions. Then you can open the question up to discussion, either verbally or in the chat.

For factual topics, you might ask a multiple-choice question and, after the responses are recorded, give the correct answer. That will not only indicate how well students understood the material and whether you need to go over it again but also get students who submit the wrong answer vested in finding out why they got it wrong.

Another option is to give the students a question and ask who can get the right answer first. Students are generally more willing to venture a guess in an online chat than live because of the embarrassment of getting something wrong in front of others. This may come as a surprise for faculty who feel like getting students to talk live can be like pulling teeth.

Looking ahead

I have long argued that online education allows for continuity in higher education, but it requires preparation. Ideally, institutions would create an LMS companion to every course, face-to-face or otherwise. The companion would at the very least host all course resources and assessments. But putting lecture content online as well would not only make the companion a complete plug-and-play backup but also allow students who miss class to get course content.

Remember that real online teaching is not simply recording yourself lecture. Doing so doesn't take advantage of the web as its own communication medium. If you are new to online teaching, take this opportunity to learn more about how real online courses are created and consider how your lectures might be converted into rich, educational online content as part of a course companion in the future.

The Importance of Saying Goodbye to Your Students in Times of Uncertainty

Ann Obermann, PhD

This spring our campuses were closed, and we quickly moved all classes online due to COVID-19. Though we have continued to work and teach together, many of us did not get to say goodbye or formally celebrate our time together as part of our larger departments and university communities. In addition, we are all experiencing the isolation and stress of sheltering in place, job loss, health fears, housing insecurity, and sustained life changes. Saying goodbye is important and hard under normal conditions, but our current context makes it even more important that we intentionally say goodbye and provide students the opportunity for celebration, closure, grieving, meaning making, and connection.

The current pandemic can make school and work feel less important, a bother, hopeless, and a distraction to what really matters. Students and teachers can lose sight of what they have learned and accomplished during the past semester, and potentially over their

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entire time in higher ed. They may even lose sight of how important their field, contributions, expertise, and relationships really are. Though difficult to endure, these are normal responses to crisis, stress, and loss. However, when we are getting ready to finish a hard semester and/or to graduate, we do not want to feel disappointed, powerless, disconnected, or that our time at our universities and colleges did not matter.

This is where saying goodbye and intentionally planning the end of your semester is essential. Goodbyes, celebrating accomplishments, and having closure supports good teaching practice and trauma informed pedagogy. Trauma, chronic stress, and loss, challenges our sense of purpose, takes away our agency, and strains relationships. As we intentionally say goodbye, think of ways you can give students a sense of purpose through making meaning of their hardships and accomplishments. Empower them by reminding them of the skills and strengths they possess. These things help combat the loss and stress experienced by students and instructors alike.

Honor your students through:

- Reinforcing their purpose and larger connection with you, their profession or discipline, and the world
- Recognizing all that they have overcome and accomplished, reminding them of their strengths and their ability to influence change in their world
- Sharing the importance of relationships by providing space for them to connect with you and their peers through saying goodbye and stating how you will stay connected in the future

Given all the competing pressures right now, you may think you don't have time to devote to goodbyes, but please challenge yourself as to whether the final chapter or lecture is really necessary and instead, make time and space for your students to name and celebrate their hardships, accomplishments, relationships, and to say goodbye.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Consider making a goodbye video, reviewing main takeaways from your course, what you have learned from your students and how they have impacted your life, how you will remember them, and your hopes for their future.
2. Provide your contact information and encourage students to stay in contact with you in the future. Encourage them to get on LinkedIn or join an alumni group on campus.
3. Use space in their final assignment feedback to include a personal statement and goodbye to each student; make sure to use their name.
4. If possible, have students invite family and/or friends to their final virtual presentations and capstones to honor all that the student has accomplished.
5. Create a meme or GIF with added humor from any technology mishap, or share an inside class joke and distribute to your students in the final week. Or have them create something in a final discussion post.
6. Have students share what they have learned, accomplished, and created, and acknowledge them getting through despite the pandemic!
7. Hold space for students to share their appreciation and feelings to one another and the instructor through a video chat like Flipgrid.
8. Express how their chosen field and accomplishments prepares them to make a difference in the world.

In addition to honoring students, it is important to recognize the stress and loss our faculty and staff has undergone. In the

past month, we have moved all our courses, support services, administration, and research to virtual and online settings. We have listened to students report job and family loss, learned to convert all our assignments to online platforms, and perfected Zoom meetings, all while managing our own homes, health, families, home schooling, grief, job loss, and daily worries of the pandemic.

Honor yourself and your colleagues through:

- Recognizing your own successes in teaching during a pandemic
- Complementing others on something you have noticed about their teaching and response during these high stress times
- Creating a top 10 list of embarrassing faculty technology blunders for "going online 2020"
- Thanking an advisor or other staff members for all they are doing to support students
- Taking pictures and documenting all that your departments and universities are doing so you can look back on it later and celebrate
- Acknowledging and finding meaning in the numerous conversations and emails you are having with students about ordinary things that are really having an extraordinary impact

Additional Resources:

- Trauma Informed Pedagogy: From Columbia University, this article provides teaching strategies for use during a pandemic. These ideas can be applied to your final class and saying goodbye.
- Maintaining Connections, Reducing Anxiety when School is Closed: This is a great article that shares practical techniques on how connections and relationships with faculty can help student deal with anxiety.
- The Year without Graduation: This article acknowledges the loss of graduation and other ending rituals. It is a helpful perspective on how to support students experiencing grief and loss.
- Preparing for your last day of class: These are good sites for planning your last day of class regardless of COVID-19 or other stressors we are currently experiencing, just good practice.
- Preparing for Your Last Day of Class: Fizzle or Finale
- Last Day of Class and Ending the Semester Right

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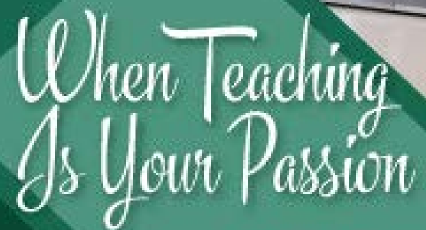

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