

Small Teaching Online

Takeaway message: Good online teaching is still built on relationships with your students. Online teaching is often perceived as a 'slow cooker meal' where you just set it up and walk away, but a quality experience still requires a relationship (and is why there is often high attrition and low performance in an online format). You will have to actively work to cultivate an online environment rich with **instructor immediacy** to motivate your students.

(As an aside, good learners (good at organizing, planning, and time management; disciplined; seek advice when need it; resilient) will be successful in any environment.)

Be aware of the **Universal Design of Learning (UDL) principles**. UDL is a means to lower barriers and create equity across time concerns, connectivity, and disabilities.

- In practice, my interpretation is that we should be **multimodal** in our teaching, both providing instructions in multiple formats (not just text all the time) and accepting assignments in multiple formats (papers, presentations, podcasts, recordings, etc). Recordings should have captions.
- Most content and assignments should be able to be completed asynchronously to accommodate students' schedules. Small activities that can provide immediate feedback (LMS quizzes, for example) might be more ideal than larger activities that require a larger chunk of time.

Backwards design is great, but it's even better when you can get students working on the final project in week 1.

- For example, you could create an activity that requires students to start looking at the final project. Maybe they start a discussion board of topics of interest or have to read the syllabus and ask one question.
- Students receive significant cognitive benefits from trying learning tasks before they are ready (**just-in-time**; here's a puzzle I'm not ready to solve so what do I need to know to get there). Low stakes in week 1 as a preview of the final project and gets them thinking about it.

Include **LO** at the start of every module and be explicit about why students are doing each assignment so that the course does not seem to be full of 'busy work'. If you provide this as a video announcement instead of written, it is more impactful. Your videos do not need to be polished or perfect, but they should be you. Students want to know your personality.

- One method is to remember for each project or assignment, state the following three points:
 1. What I want the students to do: Explain the task.
 2. Why I want the students to do it: Explain how the task will contribute to success.
 3. How to do it: Detailed instructions, rubrics, checklists, models
- **LO** are good for reflection:
 - Retrieval (recalling recently learned knowledge)
 - Elaboration (connections)
 - Generation (rephrasing and owning the ideas)
- Include how progress was made on each LO, why it matters, and what they should do to keep learning in this area.

- **At the end of the course, ask them what they have learned, how they will continue to develop that learning and apply it in their future.**

Assignments should have weekly reminders.

Scaffold large assignments with smaller assignments building to the final project. Smaller assignments should allow time for feedback (and its incorporation) so that students learn to make the final project optimal. Skills building and practice! Feedback does not have to be graded and can include peer review, not just instructor review. This also helps pace the students so that they are not completing something overwhelming the night before.

Manipulating your LMS to do adaptive release might be key. You can hide the content until students pass an automatically graded vocabulary quiz or answer short questions on the reading or look for connections among the units. Give them unlimited attempts, but they cannot move forward in the class until they pass (with whatever grade you think is appropriate, OK if it is 100% as long as they have unlimited attempts). My interpretation: make your class analogous to a video game where you cannot skip levels (unlike a book or movie where you can skip ahead). Students **MUST** engage with the content in a meaningful way. You can use this kind of formative assessment both at the beginning and end of a unit. Since this is limiting to moving forward in the class, it does not need to factor into their final grade. (Correct answer feedback can include additional readings, links to explore.)

Discussion Boards/Forums: Check these often. The more you engage, the more the students will. They want to see that you have responded to their thoughts.

- Also, take the time to 1) amplify good responses, 2) email individuals, and 3) clear up misconceptions through announcements.
- Model what you want to see your students do.
- Personalize it by summarizing students' posts using their names, directly address it, and respond more than once a week.
- Let them 'see you' in the course so that they know you care and support them.
- As the week progresses, save your own word document of exemplary comments (and who said them) so that you can craft a summary of the discussion at the end of the discussion. This serves to emphasize key points, increase motivation by calling out individuals with exemplary posts, provide a study guide, and make sure students don't miss something important.
- Avoids the problems of a traditional classroom (time limitations, dominating students, large classes)

Lecture videos

- **Not text-heavy, dry, or boring**
- **SHORT: No longer than six minutes, three is better**
- **Informal videos lead to greater engagement than high production value (you don't need to re-record until it's perfect. If you mess up, they see you as a person and that's good. Do NOT edit. Should be authentic).**
- **Software options: Screencast-o-matic, Loom, Explain Everything, ASU's TeachingOnline, Hypothesis, Google Docs, Google Slides, Quizlet**

- Could be short set of slides or speaking directly to webcam
- Captions, transcripts, or text-based outlines to accommodate students both who have a disability and who are not native English speakers
- Might want guiding questions so that students can actively engage and process while they watch
- No dates (or references to previous videos) so that you can reuse these videos
- Need accountability, so maybe short, graded assessment after the video, feedback can be linked to the video (as in see this timestamp) or make watching the video worth points
- Partial notes and incomplete slides to be filled in by the student are more effective than complete slides
- Can include high-quality media from another source that add depth and breadth to your existing materials (must support LO, no pictures for pictures' sake (can overwhelm, confuse, and distract learners)).

When students are confused, record yourself clearing up the misconception, clarifying instructions, or answering questions.

Make sure that any additional software is not a burden to your students, either in ease of use or cost. Should be keyboard only.

Self-sufficient, independent learners do exist, but most of us learn better from feedback.

Collaborative learning gets students to solve more complex problems than they could do on their own ([Zone of Proximal Development](#)). Therefore, building a community with their peers and the instructor matters. A community of inquiry has the following three traits:

1. **Cognitive presence:** construct meaning through sustained communication; reflection, drawing connections, opening to new ideas
2. **Social presence:** project their personal characteristics into the community; emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion; not just downloading information but filtering it through a human experience; more engaged when it's personal
3. **Teaching presence:** design and facilitation of the course

Build structure with opportunities of direct instruction, feedback, interaction, community

Sample assignments to build community online:

Post an introduction in the first week of class (text or video) to discussion board

Incentivize students' replies to each other, ask a follow up of at least one peer

Ask them how they can be successful in the course, what their goals are to get them into the content as well

Group assignments should

- Reflect your pedagogical practice
- Begin with a structured team-building activity (ice breaker and helps them identify roles)
- Include a plan to prevent conflict or work through it constructively
- Require transparent group communication

- Have explicit grading criteria and processes
- Task instructions should be clear (make a video so that they don't have to read it all)
- Might want a team contract

Discussion Boards

Create prompts that are discussable.

IF SOCIAL MEDIA WORKS TO PICK FIGHTS, THIS WILL TOO

Avoid closed-ended questions; offer something debatable or persuasive

Ask students to share their experience/reflection on a class concept

Case studies

Can block reading each others' original posts until ready to open it up for discussion

Require replies to a minimum number of peers

Grade:

1. deadline for initial post
2. replies to others
3. quality (length and depth)* see specs grading (ability to apply class concepts to the argument, defend their argument, reflect on their own and others' experiences, original thoughts instead of just replies)

can break these into small discussion groups if you want to give everyone opportunity so that only group members see their own board: focus and organize interactions

Make it personal: Record a video or write a biography talking about you as a person and your interest in the course content.

Might want to include a cultural awareness activity from Critical Multicultural Pavilion EdChange project.

Be empathic: allow some deadline extensions without explanations, oops tokens, revisions

Reach out to struggling students via zoom (and email) or have check-ins. Ask them if they are OK to establish trust. **IF YOU NOTICE THEY DON'T LOG IN, EMAIL SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.**

Feedback: write your grading timeline in the syllabus, return things as efficiently as possible (high stakes can take longer than low stakes)

- **Might want to break it into "This Time/Next Time" or "Strengths/For Improvement" to both justify grade and provide advice for improvement**
- **Set deadlines based on your own personal schedule, knowing your ability to return something in a timely fashion AND your ability to respond to 'night-before' questions**
- **Conversation or audio recording is equally effective as compared to written, but students prefer the audio**
 - richer, more detailed, and personal**
 - vocal support and empathy conveys that you care more than written word**
 - more encouraging because it gives them another opportunity to interact with you**

OFFICE HOURS

- Pointless to schedule, better to work by appointment on your own and the students' flexible timeline
- Mandatory or as-needed conversations with individual students (use Calendly), provide a question for discussion
- Don't call it office hours, but rather something informal and inviting
- Should not be weekly, but strategically before or after larger assignments to answer questions or provide feedback: if do this, put it in the syllabus
- Ask students to submit questions ahead of time
- Can incentivize, but have an alternative assignment for those who can't make it
- Make sure these are a good use of everyone's time
- [Speaking of](#): Click the text to see an article from Inside Higher Ed.

Get started in the class

- Make a checklist for a few points: read syllabus, entered deadlines in my calendar, need to work x number of hours, will work on course at least 4 days a week, will post questions in Q&A Discussion Board, will ask for help as needed
- Write 2 goals, one thing to achieve each, one challenge we anticipate we will have to overcome to achieve that goal, one strategy to overcome the challenge
- Provide an introductory video that shows them where you put everything in the LMS.

Give students choices when you can:

- mode of submitting assignment (text or video, for example)
- topics
- let them respond in a personal way too, relating content to their own experience
- groups (could use google doc sign-up sheet so that they pick partners and topics)

♥♥SPECS GRADING♥♥

The problem: students submit mediocre work (typically low stakes like a discussion board reply) that we then need to spend a lot of time justifying that it is lacking in depth, quality, etc to give them the C-. C's get degrees!

The solution: Students get a 0 or 100 (does not meet expectations/meets expectations). After the first 0, they rise to the standard of quality. Give them at least one chance to rewrite after the first 0.

The most meaningful course will build connections both within the course content and external to the course, as in students should be able to take something away from the course and apply it to their own life. Sometimes we need to provide this context. This provides motivation and particularly impactful for those who would struggle in the course the most. Might be good to ask them to post current events, relevant articles to the course content to force them to make connections.

Move away from written-only instructions to more videos.