Teaching Online - General Guidelines

Well, hurrah (+/-).

2020 has introduced us all to online teaching! Whether you are a fan of technical approaches to pedagogy or not, they are a useful addition to our teaching toolbox.

Online teaching is probably here to stay, to some degree. https://nyti.ms/3cBgzLV

Even when the world does get back to normal, a good-quality online course taught by a reputable and engaged professor is likely to be preferred to a rote, uninspiring face-to-face course. CERGE-EI has a great deal to offer in this respect, with our resources of highly credible professors and enthusiastic teaching fellows.

CERGE-EI's new Digital Media Center offers opportunities for our professors to share lessons and collaborate with the wider CEE community, and it's a great time to start exploring its possibilities. Synchronous platforms including Lifesize (and Zoom) give each professor the tools s/he needs to deliver effective courses from any location with a solid internet connection (rather stable in terms of both upload and download, than fast)

Asynchronous strategies for delivering course materials can also be useful. Read more below!

Designing your online course and classes: some tips for effective online teaching

GENERAL TIPS

Just like us, students are getting a lot of extra emails and other types of inputs hourly these days! Try to choose just a few **consistent channels of communication** and stick to them. And be patient with the **need to repeat things**; everyone needs a few more heads-up notices these days.

Also, keep in mind that **learning online can be more demanding for students** in the sense that they often have more readings and other tasks to do. Try not to overload them and, if possible, consider their other courses and overall study load.

And, yes, **teaching online is more demanding for us too!** We should value the fact that communication and instruction are more demanding on our side as well. It can help if we think of ways to work ahead and consider whether there are ways we can share the workload with other professors, TAs, and even with the students.

SYNCHRONOUS vs. ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION

With synchronous instruction, we're with our students in time, interacting in a virtual classroom such asLifesize. Just hold your usual lecture at the regular time! This allows live interaction, active engagement of students if managed well, and facilitates communication about logistics.

With **asynchronous** instruction, we provide materials for students to access on their own time and equip them to engage in learning activities and discussions without having to come together in space or time.

Mixed a/synchronous instruction is also related to **flipping the classroom**. You can create video lectures, slide sets, narrated slide sets, or other material types for students to study on their own time, and then meet at the regular class times for active engagement and interaction.

PARTICIPATING and FOLLOWING THE CONTENT

Many **students may be more reluctant to actively participate** in distance classes. This can mean we know less about what they are and aren't picking up! This is pretty understandable and we probably need to be more patient about this than we might in a face-to-face class. BUT there are a few practical tips that we have run across that can help:

Ask students to **raise their hands** as usual – but it can be a good idea to make them practice! If there is a chat function, this can be useful. Check out what technology supports.

Consider **running classes in shorter chunks**, giving more breaks - especially after important concepts are presented. On the breaks, ask students to prepare their questions and comments about the material you've just covered.

Give students some **focus questions and the outline of the lesson in advance** of the lesson that they can listen for. Then, ask at intervals through the class who's noticed the answer to one of these advance questions. Give them even more time than usual to formulate answers whenever you are asking questions in real time - it's challenging! And praise those who take the risk:-)

Flip the classroom. Send them slides and lecture notes for self-study and then plan a distance lesson to walk through the main points and field questions and discussion. Or narrate the slides via a recording so students can watch the lecture on their own time (and go back if they need to), and hold discussion sessions live afterward. Students are more likely to participate in class if they have time to think content through in advance.

Using a chat or conversation/messaging function can be handy. If you pose a question/s and require each student (or a student team representative) to write some sort of answer, and if they can see each other’s answers, the fact that their answers are public to the cohort can push students to invest some time and energy in their answers so as not to appear stupid or uninformed to their peers. One idea is to have one (different) problem for every group of 3 or 4 students to solve. Each group should post their solution/s (and maybe rationale) to the problem, and then the other groups should comment on the solutions produced to all problems. Many variations on this theme exist, of course. Students can also be encouraged or required to **comment on each other's draft papers** in this manner.

Ask students to work in **small study teams** (via distance of course!). Any time you can ask students to 'teach' each other is a rich opportunity for them to learn. For example, after a lesson, study groups can work together to summarize the main points, discuss what they learned, plan questions or comments about the content, and discuss ways the content could be applied or extended. Then the study group leader can be responsible for presenting their team's outputs in the first part of the next distance class. S/he will then be prepared in advance to participate in the lesson on behalf of the whole team, and you will have a more manageable number of students speaking.

In case lectures don't run the full time period, **the study team approach can be formalized** in the sense that students may be required as a part of the course to get together electronically at the end to produce a team summary of the lesson or to work on homework - the homework can still be submitted as individual tasks which will then also reflect how effectively the team is working to support each other.

Consider adding a **quiz or survey** at the end of important lessons/sections of lessons **(see the RESOURCES section for links to free and quick quiz/survey platforms).** Also, if you have not already planned a mid-term exam (even if it is not for grades), it's probably a good idea for distance courses. These can help to signal to both you and to the students where confusion may still exist. This can be especially helpful in distance learning situations when you are not receiving reliable real-time signals about what students are/are not picking up on.

GIVING FEEDBACK ON STUDENT WORK THROUGH THE COURSE:

Spring 2020: we found that **we spent more time than usual** providing extended written feedback on student papers. Though expensive in terms of time and energy, communicating in writing on student writing is one of the best possible ways to speak directly to individual students in meaningful ways. Consultations are also useful, though time-consuming. Consider small-group consults if they fit your course.

EXPECTATIONS vs REALITY

Well, you've worked hard to plan and set up your synchronous or asynchronous online lesson. You're sure that the value of the content will be evident to the students and that they understand the importance of following the lesson carefully.

But think back to the latest Zoom or Lifesize meeting you attended. How did the online meeting or conference venue affect attention and engagement? If you are typical, you likely found that you were distracted pretty often.

So, fair enough: it is probably **harder for students to focus carefully** in synchronous classrooms such as Lifesize and Zoom. This is why it can be helpful to break up lessons into smaller chunks. It can help to ask them to leave their video on, even if they are having a bad hair day. Have them raise their hands in the Lifesize forum. And check the section on 'Participating and Following the Content' and resources above for more ideas.

RESOURCES

Free Platforms for QUIZZES, SURVEYS, OTHER

https://en-gb.padlet.com/dashboard
https://www.polleverywhere.com/
https://create.kahoot.it
https://www.mentimeter.com/

TIPS AND GROUPS

https://community.mru.org/

https://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/themes/distance

Where next?

Lifesize video conferencing and online presentations

Google Drive as a safe file storage

Recording presentations and lectures

Moodle/CMS

Teachers' Tips

Cloud Services (G-Suite, Office 365, CESNET (OwnCloud, ZOOM...)

Online testing

Pedagogical Resources from the Teaching Fellows Program

From:
https://wiki.cerge-ei.cz/ - **CERGE-EI Infrastructure Services**

Permanent link:
https://wiki.cerge-ei.cz/doku.php?id=public:teaching:general_guide

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