

Building or Maintaining Classroom Community in an Online Environment

Considerations	Notes
Show and Be Yourself	Students need to see you occasionally. Many of us are self-conscious about how we look on camera. However, the connection that students feel when they see you is much more important. Include shots of yourself in your videos, use your webcam to show yourself during live lectures, show your face during online office hours or Zoom consultation meetings, etc. Also, don't be afraid to reveal a bit about yourself. Showing a pet, a child, or other things in your home (e.g., favorite painting) helps students get to see you as a person and relate more to you. If you pick a virtual background in Zoom, you can pick something that reveals a bit about yourself or shows your humorous side.
Build in Engagement	Help students connect to each other through engagement activities. See "Using Student Engagement Activities in an Online Environment" below for ideas.
Instructor Consultations/ Workshop Days	If students are working on projects (individual or group), consider offering Zoom sign-up times for consultations where you can check in on student progress, answer questions, and give real-time feedback. Offering the opportunity for students to see and interact with you in real-time provides a deeper connection and offers them a similar opportunity to what they would have had in a face-to-face environment.
Use Groups to Make a Large Class Feel Smaller	Students can interact in smaller groups and perhaps have more valuable conversations. Use breakout rooms, discussion boards, chats, or activities to have students engage in groups.
Think about Feedback	In the online environment, you may need to give more feedback to help students as they work to learn concepts. Consider giving audio or video feedback to students so they can hear your tone of voice and perhaps better connect with and relate to you.

Using Student Engagement Activities in an Online Environment

As you move your course to an online format, you may want to consider how to engage your students online. The chart below lists some common engagement activities used in face-to-face classes and how you can adapt them for online courses: synchronous (i.e., meeting at the same time online) or asynchronous (i.e., not meeting online at the same time).

The tools listed below (e.g., Canvas, Zoom, Google Apps) are Virginia Tech approved tools that all faculty, staff, and students have access to; however, there are other tools out there that you could use to implement some of these strategies. If you utilize another tool, please be aware of cost (to yourself and students), access, and FERPA issues that may arise.

For support or help, email teaching@vt.edu or tlos@vt.edu.

Engagement Activity	Face-to-Face Implementation	Synchronous Implementation	Asynchronous Implementation
Think-Pair-Share	<p>Students first do the activity on their own. Then, they pair up with a classmate to discuss their responses/answers. Finally, the pairs share out to the entire class.</p> <p>Note: Think-pair-shares work best when you ask students to write down their responses before being paired together.</p>	<p>Zoom – break out rooms for students to chat and then report back</p> <p>Canvas – use discussion boards feature for students or use the Chat tool in Canvas</p> <p>Google doc – students can work together in a Google doc to engage in a learning activity in real time</p> <p>Slack – can be set up like breakout rooms or by topics</p>	<p>Canvas – students can be purposely or randomly assigned to pairs (or small groups) for discussion boards</p> <p>Google doc – students can work together in a Google doc to engage in a learning activity</p> <p>Slack – setup like rooms or by topics</p>

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Entrance Ticket Exit Ticket	The entrance/exit ticket can be anything you want it to be. Entrance tickets get you into the class and may be a homework problem, a list of questions, opinion regarding the reading, etc. Exit tickets get students out of the class and may be problem, answer to a question, summary of the day's lesson, muddiest point, etc.	Canvas – set up an assignment, quiz, or survey for the ticket activity; students need to complete it before or after class (depending on if it is an entrance or exit ticket) Zoom – you can use the polling feature or chat to do a more informal entrance or exit ticket	Canvas – set up an assignment for the ticket activity; students need to complete it before or after the lesson/module (depending on if it is an entrance or exit ticket). Note: you can setup prerequisites and requirements using Canvas modules to have students progress through items in a sequential order
Advance Organizer (K-W-L)	Advance organizers are visual tools to aid your students' understanding of information. Prior to delving into a topic, you would have your students complete an advance organizer. A K-W-L is an advanced organizer and lets you know about students' background knowledge. Ask students to divide a sheet of paper into three columns: K, W, and L. K = What you already KNOW; W = What you WANT to know; L = What did you LEARN. Students fill in K and W before beginning the lesson.	Zoom – while sharing your screen, have a document open that you can populate with student responses to create a whole class KWL. You can also use the “White Board” in Zoom's screen sharing tool Alternately, students could first do this on their own in a document and then share their screen to show responses as you comment on student responses (note: in larger classes, you may not want to enable student screen sharing) Google Doc – while you're talking in Zoom, have students	Canvas – you can set this up as an assignment that students need to complete for the module (individual student); pairs or small groups of students could do this in a discussion board Google Doc – have students fill out a Google doc to populate the KWL as a class or in small groups if you have a larger class

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	Ask students to share their responses before beginning the lesson. The L column is filled in at the end of the lesson and can be collected as a tool to know what students took away from the day's lesson.	<p>go to a Google doc where they can all populate the information together</p> <p>OneNote – using this live annotation tool, students can submit their own content to the document</p>	
Muddiest Point	After the lesson, ask students to write down what they are most unclear about before leaving the classroom. You can use this information to let you know what material you may need to recover or approach differently.	<p>Canvas – set this up as an end of class quiz, survey, or assignment that students need to complete</p> <p>Zoom – use the chat feature to get students' questions and responses throughout the lecture via guided prompts (e.g., What elements are still unclear about ___?). This can be done as a whole class chat or in small groups with TA's, UTA's, etc. helping in breakout rooms</p>	<p>Canvas – set this up as an end of lesson/module quiz, survey, or assignment that students need to complete</p> <p>Piazza – can be used for students to submit questions regarding topics they are still unclear about</p>
Forecasting	At the beginning of class, pose a question to students but leave the ending open (or answer unclear). Ask them what they think will happen. After the	Zoom – have students respond using the chat feature or do breakout rooms for think-pair-shares/small groups, have them discuss in breakouts, and then	Canvas – individual response via a quiz or survey prior to watching online materials

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	<p>lesson, revisit the question and see how students</p>	<p>come back and report in the chat or over audio/video</p> <p>Canvas – students could respond in group discussion board or it could be an individual response via a quiz or survey</p>	
<p>Group Consensus</p>	<p>Students are given 5-10 questions that they need to work together to discuss and come to consensus on before time is up. Make sure you give students a time limit to keep the conversation focused on the questions.</p>	<p>Zoom – break out rooms for students to chat and then report back the answers to their questions. For greater accountability, have someone report the answers via a Canvas assignment/quiz or within a Google doc (a group member would need to be assigned or volunteer to report the group’s response)</p>	<p>Canvas – students can be purposely or randomly assigned to pairs (or small groups) for discussion boards to discuss the questions and come to a consensus; depending on the question types, faculty can set requirements regarding level of justification for responses</p> <p>Google doc – students can work together in a Google doc to engage in the group consensus</p>
<p>Concept Tests (i.e., Interactive Questioning, clicker questions)</p>	<p>Utilizing clickers, hands, or other technology, have students answer questions regarding lesson concepts</p>	<p>Zoom – during the live lecture, use polling questions or pause the lecture and have students take a quick assessment/quiz in the course Canvas site</p>	<p>Kaltura – you can embed quiz questions into your videos</p> <p>Canvas – setup a short, no or low stakes quiz for students to take following the lesson</p>

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Anticipation Guide	An anticipation guide is a series of statements (five is generally a good number) that students are asked to agree/disagree with or asked if they believe the statements are true/false.	<p>Canvas – set this up as a quiz, survey, or assignment for students to respond to</p> <p>Google form – set it up as a survey and then you can show the overall responses in real time</p> <p>Zoom – use the polling feature</p>	<p>Canvas – set this up as a quiz or survey for students to respond to</p> <p>Google form – set it up as a survey and then you can show the overall responses afterwards to comment on (could ask again to see if there are changes after the lesson); the document can be a live running documents where results are embedded</p>
x-Minute Paper	Usually given at the end of class, but can be given at beginning or during the lesson to prompt discussion. Ask students to describe what they learned and what was confusing. Or, you may want them to write briefly about a question or prompt you provide.	Canvas – set up as an assignment, quiz, or survey and ask students to complete at the end of class	Canvas – set up as an assignment, quiz, or survey and ask students to complete at the end of the module or activities for that lesson
Chain Notes	Think of this as collective note taking. One student begins the notes, and then the notes are passed to the next student who	Canvas – use group discussion boards to have students collectively create notes for the lesson, a collection of building	Canvas – use group discussion boards to have students collectively create notes for the lesson, a collection of building

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	<p>adds more, and so on. This could also be a “wiki” like activity outside of class.</p>	<p>questions, or a more creative task</p> <p>Google doc – have students work in small groups to collectively create notes for the lesson, a collection of building questions, or a more creative task</p> <p>Zoom – could use group breakout rooms to do this activity; a student would need to save the text and upload into Canvas to share with the instructor</p>	<p>questions, or a more creative task</p> <p>Google doc – have students work in small groups to collectively create notes for the lesson, a collection of building questions, or a more creative task</p>
<p>Student-Generated Test Questions</p>	<p>Ask students to write test questions that may be included on an actual test or quiz. To further enhance learning, ask students to justify their questions and answers in a paragraph.</p>	<p>Zoom – ask students to submit possible test questions using the chat feature; you could assign students to break out rooms and ask each group to come back with 2-3 possible test questions</p> <p>Canvas – ask students to submit possible test questions via a quiz or survey or on a discussion board (they can see others’ questions in the board to generate new ones)</p>	<p>Canvas – ask students to submit possible test questions via a quiz or survey; discussion boards could also work</p> <p>Google docs – student groups can create their own mini-tests and submit for consideration</p>

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		<p>Piazza – can use Piazza to have students submit questions</p> <p>Google docs – student groups can create their own mini tests</p>	
Categorizing Grid	Ask students to categorize content items by distinguishing characteristics. May be done individually or as a group, or both.	<p>Zoom – Whole class activity: while sharing your screen, ask students for input (chat, audio) and type in responses as they are share</p> <p>Zoom – Think-pair-share or small group activity: use breakout rooms to have students respond and then come back to report responses</p> <p>Google doc – students can create their grids in a Google doc as a small group</p>	<p>Canvas -set up as an individual activity/assignment or use a discussion board to have students discuss</p> <p>Google doc – students can collaborate together to fill out the grid</p>
Reading Rating Sheet	Provide students with a rating sheet regarding the reading and/or a course activity. The sheet should include questions regarding students’ opinions about the reading/activity, what was useful and/or unclear, and	Canvas – set up as a complete ahead of time activity/ assignment or a real time discussion in small randomized groups	Canvas –activity/ assignment or small group discussion board; could be a whole class discussion board setup so students must first respond to the prompt before seeing others’ responses

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	if they think it was valuable (why/why not).	Zoom – breakout room discussion reporting back to the whole class	Google doc – students can collaborate in small groups to fill out