Tips for Teaching Synchronously Online

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How to Structure Your Lesson

- Recognize that, like with any technology, a small percentage of students will have connection difficulties a small percentage of the time. Avoid sharing "make or break" information ONLY during your synchronous class session.
  - If students need a particular explanation or piece of information to pass the class, consider teaching it asynchronously (Blackboard, Mediasite), or make it available in multiple formats.
  - Record your lesson and make it available to students to watch later.
- If you are "lecturing," plan to interact with your students at least every 3-5 minutes.
  - Ask lots of questions!
  - Utilize interactive features in Webex like annotations, polling, chat, and the whiteboard.
  - Gamify!
- Allow students to participate in a variety of ways (verbal, chat, annotation, etc.)
- One advantage of video conference is that everyone has a great view of your lesson. Use this to your advantage! Consider what is the most effective visual to illustrate each particular moment of your lesson:
  - Close up camera shots (nothing fancy, just hold something up to the camera, or move the camera)
  - Images (screen share)
  - Video (keep it short- 3 minutes or less- if you have a longer video, pause periodically to ask questions)
  - PowerPoint

How to Utilize Time Effectively

- Reserve synchronous class time for interactive and/or collaborative portions of your class.
- Limit video calls to 1 hour or less
  - The call quality will degrade over time
  - Both participants and presenters become fatigued more quickly in an online environment
- Plan to interact with students as much as possible

How to Prepare

- Practice! Either by yourself in an empty call, or with a friend/colleague.
- Especially practice any screen sharing or advance features you plan to use.
- Write an outline for your lesson and map out all of your interactions in advance.
    - Make them **bold** so you don't forget!
- Brainstorm creative ways to get students actively involved during the lesson

Tips for Speaking on Camera

- Look at the camera, not at the screen (this gives the illusion of eye contact)
- Smile more than you think you need to (slight negative facial expressions are magnified!)
    - Show your enthusiasm!
- In general, frame up a head and shoulders shot of yourself for speaking- webcam should be approximately eye level.
- The most common mistake is too much head room!

YES   NO

- If you use gestures, keep them within the frame of your camera shot

Tips for Convincing Reluctant Students to Participate

- Have a "practice" class with students before the real one.
    - Make it informal and fun, and let them practice any technical features you plan to use.
    - Make sure everyone is comfortable with basics like chat, muting and unmuting, etc., and use the time to resolve any technical issues.
- Set clear standards for behavior and participation before the first class.
    - Make it in writing!
- Begin class with an ice breaker that QUICKLY allows (and requires) all students to respond in some way.
- **If students are unresponsive:**
    - Change question to yes/no format. Example: "What part of the homework was most confusing?" becomes "How many of you were confused by the homework?" Safety in numbers!
        - Can respond with raise hand feature or chat.

- If enough students are able to have their camera on, you can have them raise their hands, or for fun, let them choose a physical indicator.
- This is a good strategy to use early in the class to build their confidence.
  - Ask your question, then smile and stare at the camera until someone answers.
    - Also, recognize there is a delay of up to 1 second. It's worth counting to three in your head before rephrasing or giving hints.
  - Call on a specific student.
  - Give praise for any type of participation, even if it's not correct.
    - If a student gives an incorrect response, let them down gently
    - "That's a good idea, but not quite right" makes them feel more comfortable than "That's wrong." And say it with a smile!
  - Provide multiple forms of response (i.e., chat AND verbal)
  - Utilize polls or annotations for some interactions
  - Have students generate questions in advance
  - Utilize real world scenarios and personally relevant examples
  - Plan creative, interactive activities
  - Foster open ended discussion
  - Create games