

Remote Instructional Support Workshops: **Asynchronous Teaching**

David Zhu and Betsy Eudey
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Welcome!

- Meeting norms
 - Microphones muted
 - Cameras on or off
 - Raise/lower hand (virtually)
 - Chat
 - Meeting is recorded
- Please introduce yourself
 - Name
 - Department / Subject area
 - How comfortable are you with teaching an online course?

Agenda

- Welcome and introductions
- Pros and cons of asynchronous instruction
- Questions to consider
- Sample of asynchronous instructional practices
- Developing a hybrid of synchronous and asynchronous instructional approaches

Definitions

Asynchronous Instruction

- No scheduled live class meetings
- Students interact with the course based on their own schedule (but can have set deadlines throughout the course)
- Learning activities can occur at anytime
- Lends itself to more learner-centered instruction
- Often includes interactive components, but these don't generally occur synchronously/in real time

Asynchronous Instruction



- Faculty can prepare much of course in advance and not be “teaching” at a specific day/time.
- Students control pace of instruction
- Allows for flexibility in students’ lives
- Students can participate at anytime in any place
- Can be more accessible for students
- More time for “reflection” before participating in discussions/group work.



- Some delay in responding to student questions or identifying student concerns/learning needs
- Student contact is typically more limited to email, phone, LMS
- Learners may feel isolated
- Requires student self-discipline
- Requires more work to plan engaging lessons
- Instructor presence is less spontaneous

What we know about quality instruction

Community of Inquiry

- **Social presence** is “the ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g., course of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop interpersonal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities” (Garrison, 2009).
- **Teaching presence** is the "design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 2001).
- **Cognitive presence** is the "extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse” (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 2001).
- **Possible addition - Equity presence** that promotes inclusion and recognizes/challenges racial microaggressions, campus racial-gender climate, basic needs insecurities, prior schooling experiences, and structural racism in preparation experiences (Harris and Wood, 2020)

How can we best support these in an asynchronous course?

Strategies in Asynchronous Instruction

Asynchronous teaching is challenging as it is not a traditional method. While the benefits of flexibility are very attractive to students (and faculty), students are also required to overcome the “cons” that we have listed previously. The major considerations that an instructor needs to focus on are:

- Communication
- Engagement
- Evaluation

Communication

- Course organization: the nature of asynchronous teaching is the lack of instant feedback from the instructors. It is crucial that the students have a very clear and holistic view of the course: learning objectives, expected learning pace, expected learning outcome, etc.
- Method of teaching: how are the course materials to be delivered? Video recording, audio recording, PowerPoint slides, whiteboard, surveys, etc.
- Tools:
 - Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle
 - Zoom, Microsoft Team
 - VoiceThread

Riggs and Linder, Architecture of Engagement

Syllabus Communication and Engagement Policy. “The asynchronous online course syllabus must do all the foundational things a face-to-face course syllabus does, but it must also set communication policies and expectations for online engagement as well as a course schedule that outlines the frequent and meaningful engagement and reflection required for students.” Sample policy in syllabus:

“Our class is organized week by week, with each week starting on Sunday morning and ending at the close of the next weekend. Every Sunday morning, a new weekly module will open automatically. Once open, the weeks remain open so that you may go back and review content in previous weeks.

To ensure that you receive a high quality and hopefully transformative educational experience, regular participation is a requirement of this class. Typical weeks include required reading, viewing some video content, participating in discussion forums, and completing an assignment or an exam. To be successful in this class, you will need to log in at least three times per week to access course materials and to participate actively in the class.”

Actively Engaging Students in Asynchronous Online Classes. Shannon A Riggs and Kathryn E. Linder, IDEA Paper #64. December 2016. https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_64.pdf

Riggs and Linder, Architecture of Engagement, cont.

Course Orientation – via print or video. Should address the following:

- How often do students need to log in to participate?
- How much time should they set aside weekly to spend on coursework?
- Is the course entirely asynchronous, or are there synchronous activities? If there are synchronous activities, are they optional or required?
- Which tools in the learning management system (LMS) will be used?
- Where should students look for updates and breaking news about the course (e.g., announcements, email messages, discussion forums)?
- How is the course structured (e.g., by week or module, by project milestone)?
- What does a typical week's or unit's work entail in the course?
- Are any external tools or digital courseware required? If so, how should students register?
- What are the major assessments in the course, and when during the semester do they take place? If there are papers or long-term projects, what are the major milestones?
- Where can students find important due dates?
- If there are exams, are there proctoring requirements?
- Are there any unusual requirements that require advance coordination or travel, such as group work, field trips, observations, or interviews?

“Finally, instructors should explain to students in the orientation that an architecture of engagement has been intentionally created for the course and that the use of active learning strategies is intended to assure a high quality, transformative educational experience equivalent or greater to face-to-face learning experiences, and to improve their academic success.”

Riggs and Linder, Architecture of Engagement, cont.

Modular Course Structure – “When designed to reflect and reinforce an architecture of engagement, a modular course structure that breaks the larger course down into smaller parts provides several advantages:

- (1) it paces the learning experience to prioritize information and activities and to help prevent students from feeling overwhelmed;
- (2) it allows students to monitor progress regularly;
- (3) it discourages procrastination by providing regular milestones and deliverables;
- (4) it visually provides a high-level overview of the course topics, which can increase understanding of how course topics relate to one another; and
- (5) it provides space to scaffold active learning experiences and to provide sufficient opportunity for guidance and feedback on reflection activities.”

“Checklists, calendar reminders, and instructor announcements can also help remind students of the engagement architecture.”

Engagement and Evaluations

Student engagement is sometimes puzzling for asynchronous instructions.

Student self-discipline and motivation is always required, and need to be enforced.

- Announcements and emails, text messages if necessary
- FAQ
- Assignments
- Quizzes
- Exams
- Discussion Board (graded or not graded)

Importance of Teaching Presence

- “Learning is social” and student perception of connection with instructors and classmates influences perceived and actual learning.
- A sense of course “community” reduces isolation and burnout/attrition in online courses, and increases effort in group and individual projects.
- Student perception of learning is correlated with levels of interaction with their instructors
- Student satisfaction with instructors is correlated with perception of learning
- “A sense of shared purpose, trust, support, and collaboration—i.e., a sense of community—is an essential element in the development of quality online learning environments in much the same way as it is in the development of high-quality traditional learning environments” (p.12).
- “This study reveals that a strong and active presence on the part of the instructor—one in which she or he actively guides the discourse—is related to students’ sense of both connectedness and learning” (p. 13).
Good instructional design and organization are also important, but less important than instructor presence.

Teaching Presence

ACUE recommendations for establishing Teaching Presence:

- Schedule your online time – establish a regular schedule for when you will log into the course
- Be available at high-traffic times – near assignment deadlines.
- Communicate your availability.
- Provide a response to student inquiries within 24 hours (or whatever timeline you make visible)
- Provide timely and meaningful feedback on student work – set due dates in a manner that best supports prompt grading.

Engagement via Social Presence

- Icebreakers/Introductions: What kind of icebreaker or introduction activity can I create to promote social presence?
- Communication: What kinds of announcements and other communication strategies will I use to engage my students?
- Discussion forums: How will I structure discussions and other activities to promote social engagement? How will I participate in these interactions to promote social presence?
- Videos: If I create videos, how can I present material (and myself) to humanize the online course?
- Synchronous meetings: If I use synchronous tools to meet with class, how will I avoid being a “sage on the stage” and develop a learning community with my students?
- Ultimately: How will integrating social presence elements improve my students’ learning experience?

(from ACUE)

Engagement via Social Presence, continued

Harris and Wood (2020) add to the social presence with suggestions tied to being relational and culturally relevant/affirming

- Demonstrate authentic investment in student success
- Share your own background, and learn things about each student (which you might be able to connect to course content/facilitation)
- Reject deficit perspectives
- Validate and provide positive messages – you belong, you will succeed, you can do this
- Hold high expectations for performance and disappointment when this is not achieved
- Connect course materials to students' lived experiences
- Centering diverse students in every aspect of the teaching and learning experience
- Acknowledging and leveraging cultural strengths and assets
- Mirroring diverse students in course content, perspectives and materials

Assignments/Evaluation Methods

Discussions allow all to participate, meaningful reflective postings, permanent record

Utilize “Groups” within the LMS or shared documents (Googledocs, Wikis, etc) to promote collaboration, connection.

Re-imagine Discussion Boards as Interactive Spaces (Riggs and Linder)

- Discussion board as presentation space – VoiceThread, FlipGrid, YouSeeU
- Discussion board as gallery or reflection space – original art, memes, FlickrPoet, collages, etc
- Discussion board as workspace – esp useful if students are broken in to groups.

Use Web-Based Tools Outside the Learning Management System (Riggs and Linder)

- Online portfolios with reflection
- Brainstorming with reflection via Padlet
- Role-playing with reflection
- Cautions with web-based tools – make sure they’re user-friendly, likely to exist throughout the course, are accessible, and follow FERPA

Asynchronous Assignment Examples

- Exams/Quizzes
- Discussion posts
- Formative Check-ins
- Group work
- Others?

Combining synchronous and asynchronous methods

Some professors may find the combination of these two methods beneficial.

- Take the advantages of both methods.
- Controls by the instructor about how much to be synchronous or asynchronous.
- Student self-discipline and motivation is still required.
- Some considerations:
 - Need to make the course listed as synchronous for registration
 - Need to be considerate about the students' readiness for synchronous online learning: equipment (computer, camera, microphone), network speed, family issues, etc.

Questions to consider

- Does the course/subject area lend itself better to one type of method?
- Do you want students to interact with each other?
- How comfortable are you with planning an online class?
- How much time do you want to spend planning your class and each lesson?
- How much time do you want to spend assessing student work?
- Do you have students with special needs?
- Should you utilize both asynchronous and synchronous methods?

Resources for Discussion Boards/Assignments

Guide to Effective Use of Discussion Forums. UCincinnati. <https://www.uc.edu/cetl/ourwork/online/DiscussionForums.html>

Discussion Boards: Valuable, Overused? Discuss. Mark Lieberman, March 27, 2019, Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2019/03/27/new-approaches-discussion-boards-aim-dynamic-online-learning>

Five New Twists for Online Discussions. UW Extension <https://ce.uwex.edu/five-new-twists-for-online-discussions/>

Online Discussions: Tips for Students (UWaterloo). <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/blended-learning/online-discussions-tips-students>

ACUE - providing feedback for online discussions - https://acue.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Section-4_PG3_Strategic-Feedback_CFIN.pdf

Sample grading rubrics for discussion posts:

<https://www.uis.edu/colrs/teaching/assessment-and-feedback/rubrics/>

<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/discussion-rubrics/>

https://acue.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Section-4_PG1_Discussion-Ru

Online Icebreaker Resources

- The Only List of Icebreaker Questions You'll Ever Need - <https://museumhack.com/list-icebreakers-questions/>
- 65 Icebreaker Questions for Online Meetings <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/65-icebreaker-questions-for-online-meetings>
- Ice Breaking Activities <http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/institutes/fsi/2005/presentations/3/IceBreakingActivities.pdf>

Debrief, Questions and Thank You!

Betsy Eudey, Ph.D.

Professor/Director of Gender Studies

beudey@csustan.edu

209.518.5422 mobile

David Zhu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Accounting

dzhu@csustan.edu

330.289.9213 mobile