RCC English Discipline - Pedagogy in Practice   ✛   Spring Institute - May 14, 2020 - 11am to 1pm

What's Working?

A Conversation on Best Practices and Lessons Learned from our Semester as an All-Online Program

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Institute attendees took a Zoom poll to rank interest level in five different sub-topics, and we discussed them mostly as ranked except when the discussion overlapped. Listed below are best practices and strategies shared by participants followed by a list of resources mentioned during our two-hour discussion.

1. Teaching Synchronously with Asynchronous Options
2. Teaching Asynchronous-Only Lessons
3. Student Retention and Success Strategies
4. Creating Community
5. Writing Instruction and Peer Editing
6. Resources Mentioned

Please consider this advice offered during our session, copied straight from the Zoom chat:

Be Intentional and Strategic--we aren't going to do all of this! But if we can just be intentional about building community and find a tool that works for us, this can be manageable!

1. TEACHING SYNCHRONOUSLY WITH ASYNCHRONOUS OPTIONS

Screen capture of 90s boy band NSYNC
included here for silly visual pun

a. Sync Class Recordings With Async Prompts In The Video: Have synchronous class session that mirror classroom activities like mini-lectures and class discussion and group work and discussion and record them. In the recordings, leave prompts for asynchronous students to respond to in a dedicated discussion thread. You can further unify this by closing the loop by having both sync and async students participate in a follow-up discussion thread.

b. Q & A Focus: Make the live session time a chance to have discussion and answer questions about class. Record Q&A sessions with students and record those discussions for sharing inside Canvas and share with async students (Be sure to be mindful with all class videos to be aware of student privacy rights! Don't share videos of students outside of the Canvas shell; ask if students are okay with recording, when they say yes, begin recording, but then when you are recording, ask again so it is on the recording.)

c. Thesis Shares: Have students do read arounds for advice on thesis statements and discuss what works by posting statements in the chat (and the share whiteboard), but also allow asynch students to have a dedicated chat thread for doing the same and getting feedback.

d. Group Activity/Quiz: Group quiz using quiz in Canvas or Google Doc so they are taking a group quiz and talking through. Asynch students can still do the activity, but they may not get the benefit of the group discussion and support. This can be done in a variety of ways with a quiz or a shared metacognitive reading log or a puzzle activity in which smaller groups cover a large section of material.

e. Live Chat Paired With Asynchronous Discussion Thread: in general, there are many variations on the idea of a live discussion with the whole class or in breakout rooms that can then be mirrored with an asynchronous discussion thread. This can be

enhanced further by whole community discussion with a class follow-up discussion thread in which all students participate.

f. <u>Sync W/Async Model Generally</u>: One option is a standing synchronous session with the other half of class time set up as an asynchronous model so the students are able to participate in either or both ways, and able to create community in both models, which helps support success. Refer in sync session to specific students from async contributions by name and their contributions to the discussion as a way to create the class community across both modes. (Many variations on this idea shared with the understanding that sync is really helpful and appreciated, but also not always, or sometimes ever, possible for some students, so it has to be paired with async options; also remember that our summer and fall 2020 students don't have a face-to-face option even though many, if not most, would prefer at least some of that, so some sync options (not requirements) are going to be really important.)

g. <u>Empower Students On Zoom/Canvas:</u>
    a. Teach students they can change their names on the display screen in case they have privacy concerns about their name on a recording;
    b. Create ways for students to participate asynchronously in ways that they prefer – not just writing in a chat, but through their own video or audio recording, for example (they may feel unsure about their *writing* in response to classmates verbal discussion).

h. <u>Be Present in Your Feedback and Instruction to Students:</u>
    a. If you are recording or screencasting over a slide presentation, consider an option that also films you so students can see your gestures and mannerisms that help explain.
    b. Audio record your feedback on student papers – an option available in various platforms.

i. <u>Alert Students To Your Plan:</u> Use the original face-to-face or hybrid face-to-face meeting time for your synchronous portion, and let your students know that is your plan as soon as you can using the class contact roster.

2. TEACHING ASYNCHRONOUS-ONLY LESSONS
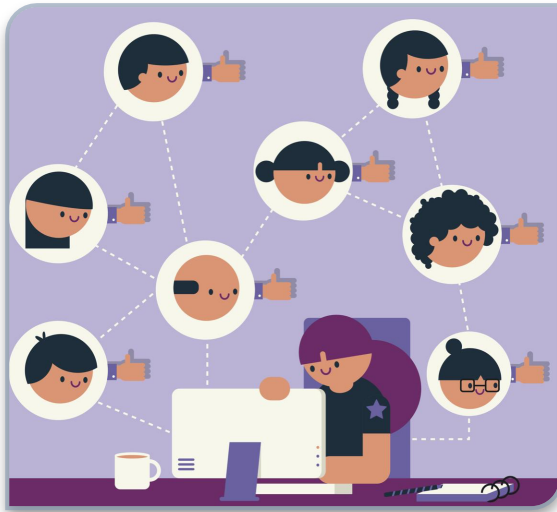
a.   Mini-Lectures With Discussion Prompts: Education writer Flower Darby suggests creating short 3-to-5 minute mini-lectures, perhaps narrating over a slide show, that is followed by a short multiple-choice quiz or written reflection or class discussion thread (Darby 69).

b.   Lesson Notes with Activities: For some asynchronous lessons, with written lesson notes, you can provide activities mixed in to the lesson notes for students to try out the skills you have been discussing; include an answer key at the bottom of the notes in white font, so they can check their own answers when they highlight the font.

c.   Lesson Notes with Companion Recordings: Share the basic notes, information, and instruction for students who want "just the facts" but include a companion video in which you expand and offer more detail for students who want more elaboration and/or to hear you verbally go over that information.

d.   Create a regular schedule: As much as possible, have a regular schedule for when new posts need to be up and for when replies have to be up. For example, if the professor begins the week with a prompt, students might need to do their post by Wednesday, and then they all have to reply to a student or a certain number of students by Sunday. Instruct students somewhere in that cycle to post in response to the issues in the discussion, but then always also generate a critical question to keep the discussion going. Note too that once the professor sets up the discussion board, they can switch to observation mode and let the students really be the main participants and drivers of the conversation so the student-to-student interaction is enhanced, and they are more empowered in the classroom space.

* Image from: https://techspirited.com/asynchronous-communication-tools

3. STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS STRATEGIES

(or managing your student worry list... including ways to be flexible and still help students get the job done)

(I don't know who stole this image that I stole from the internet, but the original artist is Allie Brosh from her book *Hyperbole and a Half: Unfortunate Situations, Flawed Coping Mechanisms, Mayhem, and Other Things That Happened*.)
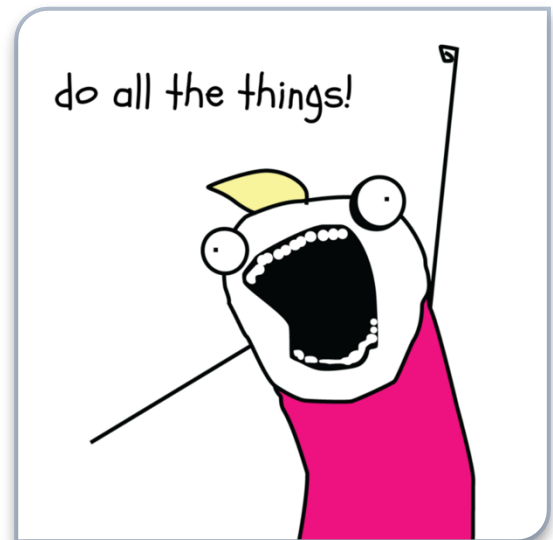
a. Validation Letter: Send a Friday morning wrap-up letter where you notice some cool things from that week's discussion, and then also include a preview of what's coming in the next week. Consider also making it a video message. Email and post to Canvas. This can include a check-in question that students can reply to individually.

b. Rebrand Your Office Hours: Flower Darby suggests you call them Happy Hours, or Coffee Break, or Tea Time, or Study Time; also, consider doing a poll from times you are available to find out when students can actually join you in zoom. Consider playing music and also offering just open synchronous work time with some background music in which students can just interject from their work hour when they have a question or a need. Office hours can be a group study session.

c. Send Direct Links: If a student is reading your emails or texts but not coming to class, send a direct link to a conference zoom session to get them to meet you for screensharing and trouble-shooting whatever the tech hang up is or whatever the general non-tech barriers are that you can help support.

d. Being Intentionally Intrusive: Check in regularly with students about how they are doing and if they are still connecting to class – this is so important, especially when we know we can't find them on campus.

e. Call Students: We acknowledged in the discussion that cold-calling didn't work so well, but one strategy for trying to catchup with folks who seem to have disappeared is to email and then say if I haven't heard from you by [WHATEVER-DAY] I just want to give you a heads up I'm going to try and call you. If you'd like to schedule a specific time, let me know. You can use *67 on some carriers or google voice number to call without sharing your personal phone number.

f. <u>Co-Generative Dialogue</u>: Ask a few students each week to meet with you about what's working and what could be modified for improvement. Ask what is a barrier they are facing and what is going well. This empowers students, but also creates more collective engagement and coalition building than individual focus.

g. <u>Affirmations to Stay Engaged with the Class</u>: Ask why questions for them to remember their motivation for continuing in the class, as a variation on Claude Steele's ideas about affirmations and goals. Ask questions like…
    a. Why are you still in the class?
    b. Why did you decide to enroll in the first place?
    c. Why did you click on today's class link, even in the middle of a global pandemic?
    d. Why did you decide to open this email announcement and read through it?
    e. Why are still thinking about finishing that essay even though it might be late?
    f. Why are you still enrolled even when it's difficult?
    g. And why are you going to keep going, no matter what?
    Remembering why is a motivational cue.

h. <u>Contract Grading With Clear Guidelines For Specific Grades</u>: "If you want a C, do these two things; if you want a B, do these three things…" etc. Clear expression of the amount of time needed and/or tasks completed linked to a grade.

4. CREATING COMMUNITY

Image from: https://www.weareteachers.com/missing-students-covid19/

a. <u>Open House:</u> Host a couple zoom open house events before class actually starts to say hello, get a zoom/canvas tour, or ask any class-related questions. Could be when class enrollment is full or a week or two before class begins.

b. <u>Icebreaker Scavenger Hunt:</u> You have five minutes – everyone in the class takes five minutes to go find something in their home. When they come back, they should introduce themselves by sharing that object and something it tells us about them. (This could work for async students as a short video recording of this explanation.)

c. <u>Zoom Background Self/Autobiography Intro:</u> Teach students how to change their zoom backgrounds, but then also have them introduce themselves by explaining what the background is; this can also be done as a PPT autobiography slide share or flipgrid videos.

d. <u>Movie Trailer For Your Class:</u> Professors can make an introduction video to their class, but create it like a movie trailer about the class introducing course themes or goals and the prof. (For Mac or iPhone users you can use iMovie; I'm sure there are android friendly equivalent apps.)

e. <u>Café Style Work Sessions:</u> As part of office hours or class work sessions, you can have open camera work sessions where you and students are working silently, maybe

with some music or background noise. Could be especially useful during research paper work periods where students might have technical questions or be able to share resources for common or overlapping topics.

f. <u>Create Community Norms For Online Space Together:</u> Work together to create the norms of participation in the zoom classroom together. One strategy, do a fill in the blank activity:

    a. "In the best class I ever had, the professor…"
    b. "In the best class I ever had, the students…"
    c. "In the worst class I ever had, the professor…"
    d. "In the worst class I ever had, the students…"

Then build the community norms and guidelines out of these conversations.

g. <u>Visual Processing For Arguments/Readings (I.E. Poster Work!):</u> Build work groups in live sessions around students who have Microsoft word or a painting or drawing program to create visual processing of readings, but also creating group work that's fun. For Async students, they can create these activities for participation and/or participate by responding to the images with a critical question or comment that the image provokes.

5. WRITING INSTRUCTION & PEER EDITING
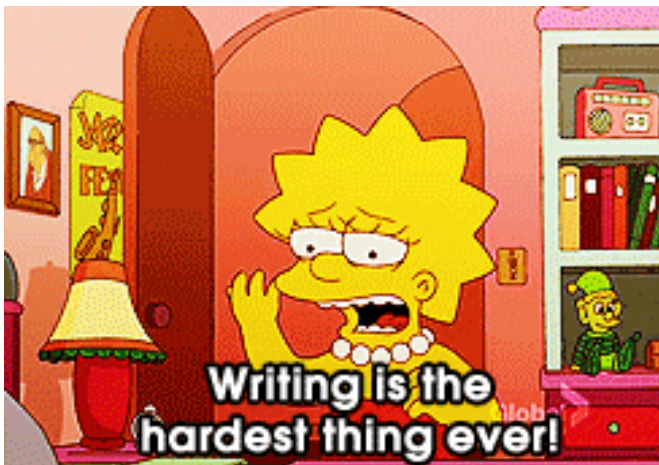
a. <u>Peer Editing In Canvas:</u> Have drafts due by one date; assign peer editors once papers are in based on who actually submits using Canvas peer editing tool; provide a clear rubric of issues for peer editors to comment on; have peer edits due by a second date.

b. <u>Writing Conferences</u>: Using Canvas/Zoom to create writing conferences so students can meet to go over writing projects one-on-one with instructor and/or in small writing groups.

6. RESOURCES MENTIONED AND CONTRIBUTORS:

Bondi, Stephanie. "Using Cogenerative Dialogues to Improve Teaching and Learning." *About Campus*, vol. 18, no. 3, July 2013, pp. 2–8. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1002/abc.21117. [co-generative dialogue]

Bondi, Stephanie, et al. "Learning through Personal Connections: Cogenerative Dialogues in Synchronous Virtual Spaces." *Teaching in Higher Education*, vol. 21, no. 3, Apr. 2016, pp. 301–312. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/13562517.2016.1141288. [co-generative dialogue]

Boss, Ginny Jones, and Chris Linder. "Navigating the Use of Cogenerative Dialogues: Practical Considerations for Graduate Faculty." *International Journal of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education*, vol. 28, no. 3, July 2016, pp. 326–334. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=120617383&site=ehost-live&scope=site. [co-generative dialogue]

Chillhop Music. Chillhop Music Channel. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOxqgCwgOqC2lMqC5PYz_Dg. *YouTube*. [for background study music]

Coffitivity. Coffitivity.com [for background café noise]

Darby, Flower with James Lang. *Small Teaching Online: Applying Learning Science in Online Class*. Jossey-Bass, 2019.

Frank, Thomas. *The College Info Geek Podcast.* College Info Geek Channel. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqfULGuGGjpAfVsADlVR6vQ/featured. *YouTube.*

-----, *Thomas Frank*. https://www.youtube.com/user/electrickeye91/featured. *YouTube.*

Hawkins, DJ (RCCD Instructional Designer) and her materials:
- Find DJ's schedule (usually) via the DE resources Canvas shell, or at the rccd distance ed page https://www.rccd.edu/admin/ed_services/de/Pages/training-calendars.aspx 0r email her at her rccd email.
- See her templates mentioned by logging in to Canvas; select Commons at the left side navigation bar; search DJ Hawkins in search bar to see your materials and templates. Mentioned specifically in the institute: "Discussion Peer Review"

Inoue, Asao*. Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*. The WAS Clearinghouse and Parlor Press, 2015.

Kahoot. Kahoot.com [for class games]

Sell, Kathleen. "How Do I Do This All At Once?" *Composing Possibilities,* 7 May 2020, https://composingpossibilities.com/2020/05/07/how-do-i-do-this-all-at-once/. Accessed 13 May 2020. [Validation letter, among other ideas]

Steele, Claude. *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.

Vitalsource.com for OER (online educational resources) materials – they are free and open source

But *most* of the ideas included here came from our institute participants who generously shared what has been working for them:

Jan Andres	Tammy Kearn	Carolyn Rosales
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