Teaching while Social Distancing in Hybrid-Synchronous Simulcast or In-Person Classes

Regardless of the mode in which we are teaching, students need opportunities to practice the important work of our courses and interact with a community of learners. When we are teaching a course with some students in the classroom and some students joining remotely, or when we are teaching students in the classroom while observing social distancing protocols, we need to provide significantly more structure to guide those interactions. Below are some principles to guide our thinking about teaching in these two modes.

two examples of how you might structure interactions in a hybrid-synchronous simulcast course or a face-to-face course with social distancing.

Some principles to guide our thinking about hybrid-synchronous simulcast teaching

- Students need frequent opportunities to work individually on tasks that require them to apply course content. Any lectures that you provide should be brief and contextualized by the work students are doing.
- Remote students need to be deliberately included in class interactions. This means that you need to deliberately and frequently shift your focus between in-person students and remote students, seek contributions from remote students, and repeat all comments or contributions from students in class so that remote students can hear them.
- Because interactions will need to be much more structured than the more informal give-and-take that often characterizes discussions in face-to-face class meetings, it can be helpful to develop a "script" to guide you through class meetings.
- It is important for remote and in-person students to have opportunities to interact with each other and develop a sense of community. If you allow classroom students to bring a computing device, you might consider developing activities in which you group or pair classroom and remote students together in a Zoom breakout room to collaborate and report out on a question or problem and to build class community. Alternately, you might consider opportunities for these students to interact outside of class using asynchronous discussions.

Some principles to guide our thinking about in-person teaching

- Students need frequent opportunities to work individually on tasks that require them to apply course content. Any lectures that you provide should be brief and contextualized by the work students are doing.
- It may not be possible for students to work in small groups and maintain appropriate social distance, but consider including some whole-class interaction where students share their thinking.
- Remember that in-class discussions may unfold more slowly or may require frequent repetition of comments because you and your students will be wearing masks. As you plan for in-class interactions, take this pacing into account.
- While it may not be possible for students to interact in small groups during class, you might consider having them engage in these kinds of interactions (through asynchronous online discussions, for example) outside of class.

Examples of effective teaching while social distancing

Below you will find two examples of strategies for engaging students who are socially distanced in the classroom and/or students who are joining a class remotely. These strategies can also be used for courses with a mix of synchronous and asynchronous delivery.

Example 1 (from a Hybrid-Synchronous Simulcast course in Financial Accounting): Students work individually and share their thinking with the whole class.

1. Before class, students read a case study.
2. At the beginning of class, the instructor displays this question in PowerPoint so that both remote and face-to-face students can see it: "For homework, you read a short case that presented basic financial statements for two companies. Based on your reading of those statements, which company would be the most sound investment? Write down your choice, and be prepared to defend it. Be sure to use the accounting principles you've been learning to guide your thinking, and keep in mind that these are the same principles you will use to do the work of the final project."
3. After students have had time to make their choices, all students write in large letters the name of the company they chose. The instructor prompts them to hold up the piece of paper displaying the company name.
4. The instructor asks two students who are joining by Zoom to share their thinking about why they chose Company A.
5. The instructor asks two students who are in the face-to-face class to share their thinking about why they chose Company A, repeating their responses so that remote students can hear. He briefly recaps all the reasons why students chose Company A.
6. The instructor asks two students who are joining by Zoom to share their thinking about why they chose Company B.
7. The instructor asks two students who are in the face-to-face class to share their thinking about why those chose Company B, repeating their responses so that remote students can hear. He briefly recaps all the reasons why students chose Company B.
8. The instructor offers a brief recap that articulates the different reasons students had for their choices, then delivers a short lecture where he explains any gaps in student thinking that emerged. Then he reveals which company he believes would be the soundest investment and why.

Example 2 (from an In-Person Course in Bioethics): Students work individually in class and then work together asynchronously using discussion boards.

Note: This plan may include students who are joining remotely as well.

1. Before class, students read introductory material about two theories in bioethics that can be used to explain conflicting positions about common contemporary issues.

2. At the beginning of class, students do a brief individual writing task where they explain their current understanding of those two theories. The instructor asks some students to share their thinking so she can identify gaps in their thinking and uses short chunks of lecture to provide some fuller explanation of the theories.
3. At the end of class, the instructor briefly describes a referendum about assisted suicide that will be held in New Zealand in November 2020. She asks students to consider which of the two theories they have been learning about would best inform their decision about how to vote in that referendum. Students are directed to visit their group's area in the class Blackboard site to find instructions for their discussion of the referendum.
4. When students log into Blackboard, they find these instructions to guide their discussion: "This week, you have been learning about two important theories in bioethics, which you will need to use to write the upcoming position paper. In class, I described a referendum about assisted suicide that will be held in New Zealand this November; I have also attached a brief description of that referendum here for your reference. Now I want you to decide which of the two theories we have been learning would best inform your decision about how to vote if you were voting in that referendum. State which theory you would choose and explain why in a post of 200-250 words. Make your initial post by Tuesday night at 11:59 pm.

   After you have made your initial post, you will be able to read your group members' posts. As you read what your group members have posted, find one person who disagreed with you and chose the other theory: write a reply to explain how their argument changes your position or does not change it. Your reply should be about 100 words. Post your reply by Thursday night at 11:59 pm."
5. In the next class after the groups have completed their discussions, the instructor provides a brief verbal recap of all the group's discussions, explaining whether one theory clearly seemed to be more useful than the other, how students were using the theories to inform their positions, and where there were important points of disagreement or debate. The instructor addresses any gaps in understanding of the theories that emerged in these discussions.