The basics of online student engagement and online instructor presence

Webinar #1
Webinar series to support faculty who are new to teaching online

Online Campus
Matthea Marquart and Kristin Garay
Monday, March 23, 1:00-2:00pm ET
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Welcome, agenda, and introductions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Options for engaging students via instructor presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Options for engaging students using live class session tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Options for engaging students outside of live classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wrap up, Q&amp;A, and thank you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome!

Note: Please feel free to chat and/or Tweet throughout this session: @ColumbiaSSW
Webinar series to support faculty who are new to teaching online

Webinar #1: **The basics of online student engagement and online instructor presence**: Engaging students using instructor webcam, chat, polling, and breakout rooms

Webinar #2: **Trauma-informed teaching & learning (TITL) online**: The principles of TITL, practical ways to apply them online, and self-care for instructors and students

Webinar #3: **Inclusive online teaching and teachable moments in online classrooms**: Creating an inclusive classroom community online, responding to microaggressions online, and other teachable moments online

Webinar #4: **Panel of instructors who have experience teaching in both physical and online classrooms**: Sharing advice and lessons learned
A couple notes about today’s session

This week we are using Adobe Connect for our webinars, and next week we will use Zoom. You are welcome to attend both to see the difference.

Today is the first session of our series, so we will go at a slower pace today than for webinars #2-4, to ease into this series.
Your Presenters

Matthea Marquart, MSSW; Twitter @MattheaMarquart
Director of Administration, Online Campus; Lecturer

Kristin Garay, MSW
Manager of Online Campus Technologies; Associate
Intro to CSSW’s Online Campus

Online campus launched in Fall 2015; First graduates in May 2017

Master’s of Science in Social Work program options:
1) Advanced Generalist Practice & Programming
2) Advanced Clinical Social Work Practice
3) Policy Practice
4) Social Enterprise Administration

Primary model:
- Weekly synchronous (live) classes in Adobe Connect + asynchronous homework in Canvas

https://socialwork.columbia.edu/academics/online-msw/

Source: Twitter #CSSW2017
A note for these challenging times

If you are quickly transitioning to teaching online in response to COVID-19 social distancing:

We do not expect you to be perfect. Everyone is balancing a lot and trying hard. We’re offering our advice to support you.

Thank you for all of your efforts for your students.
What’s in this for you?

Learn about the basics of online student engagement and online instructor presence, including:

- Instructor webcam
- Chat
- Polling
- Breakout rooms

- Share experiences
- Ask questions
- Add to your toolkits
Classroom chat

This is the chat
Introductions: Chat and Poll

Chat: Please share your institution and something that’s been helpful for stress relief these days.

Poll: What made you come to this webinar?

Poll: What is your comfort level with engaging students online?
Classroom polls

Polls - Short Answer

How to answer
Type answer **and** click the icon to submit

You can tell answer was submitted if
You see the message “Answer is submitted” below your typed answer
Classroom polls

Polls – Multiple Choice

How to answer
Click the circle next to your answer
You can only select one answer

What experience do you have with online classes
- I'm new!
- I've taken online courses before, without live class sessions
- I've taken online courses before, with live class sessions
- No Vote

You can tell your answer was submitted if
Any circle other than “No Vote” is selected
Classroom polls

Polls - Multiple Answer

**How to answer**

- Click the box next to your answer(s)
- You can select multiple answers

**You can tell your answer was submitted if**

- You see one or more checkmarks
# AGENDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
Options for engaging students via instructor presence

- Instructor webcam & mic
- Showing classroom materials -- e.g. slides, handouts, videos, images
- Balancing the chat
- Setting the norms
Instructor webcam & mic

- If possible with your internet connection, seeing the instructor makes a huge difference in engaging students (if webcam is not possible, consider uploading a pic of yourself -- your students likely miss seeing you)
- Remember to hide anything in your background that you don’t want students to see
- Webcam quality doesn’t need to be high / perfect
- Students need to be able to hear you clearly:
  - A headset with mic is helpful
  - Log into classes early to test the audio

A helpful blog post: https://www.laureliversonhitchcock.org/2020/03/16/the-power-of-lighting-in-a-virtual-classroom-tips-on-improving-webcam-lighting-for-online-educators/
Showing classroom materials -- e.g. slides, handouts, videos, images

- Your slides don’t need to be works of art. Black text on a white background is perfectly fine.
  - Make sure the font size is large enough to be legible
  - Sans serif fonts are more accessible (e.g. Verdana, Helvetica, Arial)
- Videos take up a lot of internet bandwidth -- try assigning them as homework rather than showing them during class
- If you plan to ask questions during class, it’s helpful to write them on your slides. As we’ll discuss in tomorrow’s webinar on Trauma-informed teaching & learning (TITL) online, students may find it hard to focus and may benefit from repetition.
Balancing the chat

- Chat is helpful for students to engage with you and with each other, without interrupting
  - It may feel overwhelming to keep up with the chat at first, but we recommend allowing students to use it anyway
- You can ask students to take leadership roles in class -- e.g. A chat leader who comes onto mic to let you know when there’s something in the chat you should notice
Setting the norms

- Let students know what you expect of them
  - E.g. Can their children be in the room? Are you OK with pajamas?
- It can be helpful to set community agreements together, including a discussion of netiquette
- We recommend compassion, gentleness, flexibility where possible
<table>
<thead>
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</tbody>
</table>
What tools do you have?

- Webcam & mic
- Breakout groups
- Chat
- Polls

Image source: https://pxhere.com/en/photo/868966
Sometimes less is more

When planning your class, remember that you don’t have to use every tool during every class.

More isn’t always more.

Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grumman_A-6A_Intruder_simulator_instrument_panel_Pilot_stuff_left,_Bombardier_Navigator_stuff_right_(6091776000).jpg
What if something doesn’t go as planned?!

1. Don’t panic!
2. Don’t be afraid to be transparent about it in the moment.
3. Have a backup plan - it can be low tech.

“Don’t Panic.”

Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy

Image source: https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap200112.html
Student webcam & mic:
Students can be seen and heard by the class.

In-person equivalent:
speaking during a class discussion or to ask a question

Things to keep in mind regarding how is this different from the in-person equivalent
- Eye contact is different
- No shared physical space
- May not have all students on camera - the “feedback blackhole”
- Variety of internet speeds
Using student webcam & mic:

- Class discussions
- Student presentations
- Student questions
- (Webcam) See student body language - For example: do they look confused?

Instances where it might not be the best fit:
- Depends on teaching style and subject, but it may become a poorer fit as class size grows

Tips:
- Use student names more often than you would in person to compensate for the inability to make eye contact with one person.
- Don’t be afraid to use the chat as a fallback plan if a student is having technical trouble with their microphone.
- It is a bit easier to accidentally interrupt in an online discussion, so pause a split second longer than you normally would before responding.
Breakout rooms:
Students work in separate groups and then come back together as a class

In-person equivalent:
Students turning desks to work with those sitting next to them.

Things to keep in mind regarding how is this different from the in-person equivalent
○ Students will need working microphones (webcams optional) to participate. If their microphone isn’t working, they can use the chat as a backup.
○ If students are being provided with a handout or other materials to discuss, you will need to provide those digitally.
Using breakout rooms:

- Multiple group discussions
- Working project groups
- Group activity
- Role plays

Instances where it might not be the best fit:

- Good fit when the in-person equivalent would be used. The only additional element to keep in mind is student technology. If students don’t have working microphones, breakout rooms may not be the best fit.

Tip:

- If groups will be reporting back to the whole class after activity, ask student groups to choose their group reporter before they begin their breakout activity.
- Instructing groups to select a recorder (note taker) and discussion leader can also help the activity run smoothly.
Chat:
Students participate during class in writing.

In-person equivalent:
A bit like student emails to instructor or approaching instructor after class with a question. However, there is no direct equivalent, so applying this tool for the first time may not be as intuitive as student webcam & mic and breakout rooms.

Things to keep in mind regarding how is this different from the in-person equivalent
○ Written communication doesn’t include tone of voice or body language so it is easier to misunderstand intention.
○ Your classroom likely doesn’t already have set norms or expectations for the use of chat. Remember that you, as the instructor, can set those expectations for how the tool is used.
Using chat:

- Students can chat with each other
- Students can interact with the instructor, guest speakers, the TA, etc.
- Students can reply to instructor’s questions
- Students can ask questions
- Instructor and students can share links to resources

Instances where it might not be the best fit:

- If you want all students to respond to a question without seeing their peers’ replies before submitting their own, a poll is a better tool to use

Tip:

- Chat is a good tool to encourage students to ask their questions. Students who may be otherwise hesitant to ask a question, may feel comfortable asking it in writing using chat.
- As an instructor, it isn’t possible to read all chat messages while you’re speaking, so it can be helpful to plan to periodically check the chat for questions.
Polling:
Ask a question during class that is answered by all students. Question types depend on classroom platform (computer program), but can include multiple choice, check all that apply, and typed short answers.

In-person equivalent:
Most in-person classes likely don’t have a direct equivalent to polling in online classrooms. Some rough equivalents are passing out a written survey or questionnaire, and asking for a raise of hands in response to a question.
Is this thing on?

Image source: https://www.pikrepo.com/fqlef/rodent-holding-gray-microphone
Using Polling:

- Measure student understanding
- Measure student comfort level
- Collect information
- Collect feedback
- Ice breaker / fun trivia
- Coming back after an in-class break

Tip:
- When using polls in class, especially a poll to test student comfort level or understanding, make sure you take time to discuss the results.
- When creating polls, think about how you can use this to enhance student understanding or build community instead of simply checking in to see if students are present.
<table>
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Options for engaging students outside of live class sessions

- Announcements in your learning management system
- Feedback while grading
- Email and phone
Announcements in your learning management system

- These are usually archived in one place, so that students can look back easily
  - This is particularly helpful if they’re receiving a lot of emails
- Remember to sign your name
- Recommended:
  - Scannable bold headers, bullet points
  - Warm, compassionate tone
Feedback while grading

- Recommended:
  - Warm, compassionate tone
  - Where possible, flexibility with the rubric
Email and phone

- Contingency plan in the case of slow internet connections
<table>
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</tbody>
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Wrap up: Poll and Chat

Poll: What is your comfort level with engaging students online?

Chat: What’s something new & helpful you learned in this session?
Thank you!!!

Questions & Answers

Thanks to the Columbia University School of Social Work’s (CSSW) Online Campus

If you’re interested in learning more about CSSW’s Online Campus:

- The CSSW website
- Public hearing testimony about our Online Campus for the New Jersey Senate Higher Education Committee Feb 25, 2020 (Appendix pp. 25-32)
- A journal article about our faculty training
- Op Ed: Need to move your class online in a hurry? Here’s how
- One-pager: Quick Tips for Online Instruction: The Basics
- One-pager: Preparing to teach your first class online in Zoom