****Planning for Synchronous Activities that Support Inter/Active Learning**

**Pivotal Pedagogy Fundamentals**

**Active learning = student participation and engagement with the material in a meaningful way during class time.** Often “meaningful engagement” implies meaning-*making*: students don’t just ask questions but contribute their own experiences, solutions, recommendations, alternative perspectives. In “interactive” learning, students often engage directly with other students with a minimum of faculty presence

**Instructor-led = guided discussion or practice for the whole group**, in which the faculty member provides questions and/or answers, leads students through a problem-solving activity, or moderates a larger discussion

**Student-interactive = guided discussion or practice for pairs or small groups of students** which are not all directly supervised by the faculty member; students may share responses, solve problems, explore specific questions or cases, or compose documents

**Level 1, Option A: Plan for Face-to-face Socially Distanced Instructor-led Active Learning**

Rather than hope that an “organic” discussion will provide all students the option for engagement, plan ahead to create entry points for all students to access and sequences of topics/actions that move students toward higher-level engagements.

***Key Challenges to Mitigate***:

* Students may have difficulty hearing across distance and masks
* Social cues for “organic” turn-taking may be limited by distance and masks, and more students may feel awkward or left out
* Students may be more stressed—overall, by the risk of the classroom, by the challenges of socially-distanced learning

***Key Mitigations***:

* Plan questions or activities in advance so that they directly support your learning goals and so that you sequence from easy-access opening questions to more challenging analyses or applications; consider cueing students before class about likely topics/activities
* Provide framing questions, instructions, and/or goals in visual as well as auditory forms; coach students on speaking up for the whole room
* Design explicit procedures: explain norms for volunteering or being called on; consider building time for everyone to reflect or write before anyone responds; deliberately seek additional questions or views from quiet students (if everyone has written ahead of time this is “cool calling” rather than “cold calling”); plan for a second round that “raises the bar” toward more advanced learning
* Consider using quick-survey options, either through electronic-device-based polling (Blackboard, PollEverywhere.com, Quizlet.com) or through show-of-hands or show-of-one-of-three-colored-notecards-issued-the-first-day-of-class, to help the class see where everyone stands

**F2F Instructor-led Discussion/Activity Planner**: Choose a day in the first three weeks of the term to focus on.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Course Name** |  |
| **Topic/Subtopics for the Day** |  |
| **Relevant Learning Goal(s)/Outcome(s)**: This activity will help students be able to \_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| **Estimated Time of Activity** |  |
| **Prepare before class**: Notes on 2-3 items, tasks, or norms |  |
| **Start the Discussion/Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to give many students an easy-access way to activate their minds |  |
| **Maintain/Elevate the Discussion/Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to help students increase the sophistication or complexity of their responses |  |
| **Close the Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to ensure students understand the key take-aways |  |

**Active learning = student participation and engagement with the material in a meaningful way during class time.** Often “meaningful engagement” implies meaning-*making*: students don’t just ask questions but contribute their own experiences, solutions, recommendations, alternative perspectives. In “interactive” learning, students often engage directly with other students with a minimum of faculty presence

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**Level 1, Option B: Plan for Web-Conferencing Instructor-led Active Learning**

Rather than wait for questions to arise organically, or hearing from the same 2-3 students in a “discussion,” take steps to involve students in a whole-class investigation or problem-solving activity by integrating sequential activities in Chat or Polling

***Key Challenges to Mitigate***:

* Students may have occasional disruptions in sound/video quality, both for hearing and for speaking
* Turn-taking in video-conferencing is challenging even with half a dozen close friends or colleagues (“No, wait, you go first”); to include more than a few people in the conversation or task requires the use of non-audio channels
* Students may be more stressed—overall, by the risk of the classroom, by the challenges of socially-distanced learning
* Not all students may be comfortable sharing video, especially if the session is being recorded for sharing later

***Key Mitigations***:

* Plan questions or activities in advance so that they directly support your learning goals and so that you sequence from easy-access opening questions to more challenging analyses or applications; consider cueing students before class about likely topics/activities
* Provide framing questions, instructions, and/or goals in visual as well as auditory forms
* Design explicit procedures: explain norms for volunteering or being called on (“hand-raising” or chat box); consider building time for everyone to reflect or write before anyone responds (“everyone type an answer but wait until my cue to post to chat”); deliberately seek additional questions or views from quiet students (if everyone has written ahead of time this is “cool calling” rather than “cold calling”); limit instructor talking to short bursts with planned all-student-actions in between; scan polls or chat so you can call out strong responses and/or note interesting patterns
* Consider combining quick-survey options through polling with more substantive tasks (“list two possible alternatives in chat”)

**Synchronous Web-Conferencing Instructor-led Discussion/Activity Planner**: Choose a day in the first three weeks of the term to focus on.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Course Name** |  |
| **Topic/Subtopics for the Day** |  |
| **Relevant Learning Goal(s)/Outcome(s)**: This activity will help students be able to \_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| **Estimated Time of Activity** |  |
| **Prepare before class**: Notes on 2-3 items, tasks, or norms |  |
| **Tools**: 1-2 notes on conferencing tools (chat, polling, hand-raising) that you need to be familiar with |  |
| **Break up the Instructor Presence**: 1-2 notes on how to split a lecture or “chunk” subtopics/interests |  |
| **Plan the First Round of Discussion/Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to give many students an easy-access way to activate their minds |  |
| **Second Round: Maintain/Elevate the Discussion/Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to help students increase the sophistication or complexity of their responses |  |
| **Close the Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to ensure students understand the key take-aways |  |

**Active learning = student participation and engagement with the material in a meaningful way during class time.** Often “meaningful engagement” implies meaning-*making*: students don’t just ask questions but contribute their own experiences, solutions, recommendations, alternative perspectives. In “interactive” learning, students often engage directly with other students with a minimum of faculty presence

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**Level 2, Option A: Plan for Face-to-face Socially Distanced Student-Interactive Learning**

Rather than ask students to converse across multiple six-foot distances verbally, select a technological mediation that will support collaboration. **Recommended basic tool: Shared Document (MS Word Online) that includes instructions and designated “response areas,” where all students can compose together simultaneously.**

***Key Challenges to Mitigate***:

* Students may have difficulty hearing across distance and masks, and may succumb to temptations to move closer or remove masks
* Students will be unable to see one another’s documents or screens to check on individual or group responses
* Social cues for “organic” turn-taking may be limited by distance and masks, and more students may feel awkward or left out
* Students may be more stressed—overall, by the risk of the classroom, by the challenges of socially-distanced learning

***Key Mitigations***:

* Plan questions or activities in advance so that they directly support your learning goals and so that you sequence from easy-access opening questions to more challenging analyses or applications; consider cueing students before class about likely topics/activities
* Provide framing questions, instructions, and/or goals in visual as well as auditory forms; coach students on soliciting their group members’ input; discuss norms about providing constructive feedback
* Provide explicit procedures:
	+ Explain the goal of the activity and the desired “deliverable(s)”; consider using “sponge tasks” so that students who quickly complete the 3 main tasks expected of everyone can continue learning by taking on Task 4 and Task 5 which further raise the bar and “soak up” their attention, while other groups finish the first three steps
	+ Explain communication norms: where is it reasonable for students to pause and speak out loud; when should they use an Insert Comment or write in an identified “Chat Area” of their document
	+ Identify steps where *all students type* as well as steps where students respond to others, and provide clear spaces in the document that make getting started obvious (tables with student names in the first column can be useful)
	+ Identify steps where students respond to, select, and/or synthesize one another’s responses: in the same initial table, in a second area of the document; via spoken conversation
	+ Create a back-up plan for an activity that stalls early on (how can you go back to an easier question/task?), or one that takes students longer than anticipated (how will you know when to stop?)
* Consider planning for “spontaneous” social time
	+ How can opening or closing questions connect students’ personal or professional lives to the discussion, to build community
	+ How can “wildcard” questions prompt students to take risks or propose ideas that require collective imagination
* Identify how and when you will connect with groups, verbally and/or online, to provide encouragement and connect with students
	+ Even in a traditional F2F classroom it can feel awkward to interrupt a group; the new setting may make this harder
	+ Consider entering by calling out a recent productive response and asking a question to help the response be even better (“I like \_\_\_; could you also consider \_\_\_”
	+ Consider leaving by using an improv comedy trick: give the group their next opening by providing another question to consider (even if it’s the next task on the list), and wait briefly for the first person to chime in with a response so that they are moving on their own as you leave

**F2F Student Interactive Pair or Small-group Activity Planner**: Choose a day in the first three weeks of the term to focus on.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Course Name** |  |
| **Topic/Subtopics for the Day** |  |
| **Relevant Learning Goal(s)/Outcome(s)**: This activity will help students be able to \_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| **Estimated Time of Activity** |  |
| **Groups**: 1-2 notes on the size and/or composition of groups, how students will join groups at the start of the activity, and what combination of voice/text they should use |  |
| **Tool(s)**: 1-2 notes on the technology you will use to mediate group work, and what students will need in order to access the tool(s) |  |
| **Prepare before class**: Notes on 2-3 items, tasks, or norms |  |
| **Start the Activity**: 1-2 notes on the direct instructions you will prepare in order to give all students an easy-access way to start the groupwork (don’t rule out the helpfulness of non-course-related introductory “warm-ups”) |  |
| **Maintain/Elevate the Activity**: 1-2 notes on the direct instructions you will prepare in order to help students increase the sophistication, synthesis, and/or complexity of their responses; consider options for them to provide alternatives, critiques, challenging questions, or connections to other courses/topics/assignments; also note how you will track/intervene as needed to support student work |  |
| **Close the Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to ensure students understand the key take-aways: remember that it’s not always necessary for each group to report out, especially if there’s already an accessible record of their work (one alternative: consider a “virtual gallery walk” by each group to another group’s document in a folder) |  |

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**Level 2, Option B: Plan for Synchronous Web Conferencing Student-Interactive Learning**

Rather than only suggest students “talk about X,” use breakout groups with explicit directions and deliverables to enable students to interact productively with others through voice / video / text.

**Recommended basic tool: Breakout Rooms in Collaborate Ultra or Zoom, with written directions provided in advance**

**Secondary tool: Chat or Shared Document (MS Word Online) to help students share work, collect key takeaways, and/or plan to report-out.**

***Key Challenges to Mitigate***:

* Students may have occasional disruptions in sound/video quality, both for hearing and for speaking
* Turn-taking in video-conferencing is challenging even with half a dozen close friends or colleagues (“No, wait, you go first”); discussing complex ideas with (relative) strangers can silence or stress students
* Students may be more stressed—overall, by the risk of the classroom, by the challenges of socially-distanced learning
* Not all students may be comfortable sharing video, especially if the session is being recorded for sharing later

***Key Mitigations***:

* Plan questions or activities in advance so that they directly support your learning goals and so that you sequence from easy-access opening questions to more challenging analyses or applications; consider cueing students before class about likely topics/activities
* Provide framing questions, instructions, and/or goals in visual as well as auditory forms, accessible in each breakout room through Chat, shared document, or Blackboard page; coach students on soliciting their group members’ input; discuss norms about providing constructive feedback
* Provide explicit procedures:
	+ Explain the goal of the activity and the desired “deliverable(s)”; consider using “sponge tasks” so that students who quickly complete the 3 main tasks expected of everyone can continue learning by taking on Task 4 and Task 5 which further raise the bar and “soak up” their attention, while other groups finish the first three steps
	+ Explain communication norms: where is it expected that each group member should contribute before moving on, and where can the discussion proceed more fluidly? What if anything should be written (in Chat, in a shared document) instead of or as well as being spoken?
	+ Identify steps where *all students provide an idea* as well as steps where students respond specifically to others; providing comment stems (“I hear that Ali and José said \_\_\_; I agree with \_\_ and I have a question about \_\_\_”) can help students normalize constructive approaches
	+ Identify steps where students respond to, select, and/or synthesize one another’s responses: consider using a shared document with prepared questions or labeled tables to help organize note-taking
	+ Create a back-up plan for group discussions that stall early on (how can they go back to an easier question/task?), or ones that go more slowly anticipated (how will you know when to stop?)
	+ Use the system’s announcement option to cue groups about remaining time and the task(s) they should be completing
* Consider planning for “spontaneous” social time
	+ Starting a conversation over video can be challenging for some students: consider having students start with chat or document comments on a question they might all have differing views on, to “warm up the room”
	+ How can opening or closing questions connect students’ personal or professional lives to the discussion, to build community?
	+ How can “wildcard” questions prompt students to take risks or propose ideas that require collective imagination?
* Identify how and when you will connect with groups, verbally and/or online, to provide encouragement and connect with students
	+ Even in a traditional F2F classroom it can feel awkward to interrupt a group; web-conferencing may make this harder
	+ Consider entering a group’s discussion by “knocking” to let them know you’re there, and then calling out a recent productive response and asking a question to help the response be even better (“I like \_\_\_; could you also consider \_\_\_”)
	+ Consider leaving by using an improv comedy trick: give the group their next opening by providing another question to consider or waiting for them to make that move (even if it’s the next task on the list), and wait briefly for the first person to chime in with a response so that they are moving on their own as you leave

**Synchronous Web Conferencing Student Interactive Pair or Small-group Activity Planner**: Choose a day in the first three weeks of the term to focus on.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Course Name** |  |
| **Topic/Subtopics for the Day** |  |
| **Relevant Learning Goal(s)/Outcome(s)**: This activity will help students be able to \_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| **Estimated Time of Activity**: Note that video discussions often have a longer start-up time and a longer finish-up time than F2F ones do |  |
| **Groups**: 1-2 notes on the size and/or composition of groups, how students will join groups at the start of the activity, and what combination of voice/text they should use |  |
| **Tool(s)**: 1-2 notes on the technology you will use to mediate group work, what techniques you will need to be fluent in to move students around, and what students will need in order to access the tool(s) |  |
| **Prepare before class**: Notes on 2-3 items, tasks, or norms |  |
| **Start the Activity**: 1-2 notes on the direct instructions you will prepare in order to give all students an easy-access way to start the groupwork (don’t rule out the helpfulness of non-course-related introductory “warm-ups”) |  |
| **Maintain/Elevate the Activity**: 1-2 notes on the direct instructions you will prepare in order to help students increase the sophistication, synthesis, and/or complexity of their responses; consider options for them to provide alternatives, critiques, challenging questions, or connections to other courses/topics/assignments; also note how you will track/intervene as needed to support student work |  |
| **Close the Activity**: 1-2 notes on how to ensure students understand the key take-aways: remember that it’s not always necessary for each group to report out on their full discussion, especially if there’s already an accessible record of their work (one alternative: consider a “virtual gallery walk” by each group to another group’s document in a folder) |  |