Contingency Planning for Your Course:
What decisions can you make now to avoid emergency decisions later?

Faculty and students in Northern Virginia may encounter health issues disrupt attendance and participation or inclement weather disruptions during the semester. Planning for continuity of instruction, whether for one student or the entire class, is an easier task when tackled before the disruption occurs.

Why should I worry about this in advance?

Students benefit when expectations and plans are clearly communicated, and when they have time to practice any difficult skills – including using technology we may expect they are already comfortable with – prior to being "on the spot" in a class meeting. The more we can prepare them in advance for what we want them to be able to do in case our normal operations are disrupted, the more comfortable they will feel.

Faculty benefit when emergency disruptions – from illness to inclement weather – can be anticipated and planned for through thoughtful design of contingency activities. Scenarios to consider range from students being absent due to illness or caretaking duties, to instructor illness or absence, to inclement weather that impacts campus activities or internet and electricity.

Questions to consider . . .

- How many students are in your class?
- Does your classroom technology and physical layout support students Zooming in? Does it support effective small-group work?
- Are the students familiar with using semi-synchronous or asynchronous workspaces, or other tools you might have them use?
- Do you have time to practice using these tools with students early in the semester?
- What are your desired outcomes/goals for each class session?

Before the disruption occurs . . .

- Provide clear instructions in Canvas for where and how communication will happen during disruptions.
- Share your expectations for what students should be prepared to do in case of absence or inclement weather.
- Organize students into pairs/triads to exchange contact information.
- Enable the "Send Email" options in Canvas.
- Make sure the Canvas app is working on your mobile device (if you want to be able to contact students in case of inclement weather/loss of power).

If you might want to allow students to Zoom in to an on-campus class:

- Create the Zoom classroom as a recurring meeting & post the link/password in Canvas.
- Do a technology check – in the classroom and at home – for you and for students.
- Practice with students using semi-synchronous or asynchronous workspaces early in the semester.

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Continuity of instruction activities…

Here are some suggestions for how continue instruction during potential disruptions this semester.

Concurrent Online + Onsite Activity:

If your students have the ability to Zoom in and your classroom will support a strong interactive experience, consider ways you can adapt your in-class activities to a blended model where some students are online (via Zoom or Teams), and some are onsite.

- ✓ *What to prep now:* Tech check! Set up a system for students to request a Zoom link & decide how much advance notice you need.

- ✓ *What to implement on the day of class*: Assign an onsite student to log in to the Zoom room to relay questions & be tech support. Create online vs. onsite-specific docs/files (as needed) to support in-class work.

- ✓ *What could this look like:* Small-group discussion, with online and onsite groups; multimedia activities like virtual gallery walks (learn about gallery walks here) or viewing prerecorded presentations with options for online and onsite discussion.

Independent Activity:

Plan an activity students can complete at home, possibly without access to the internet and/or without power (although if students have lost power, consider giving them a pass for the week).

- ✓ *What to prep now:* Consider what students can do on their own. What if they don't have internet access or power – what is accessible on their phone? Create one or more activities you can implement at any time during the semester.

- ✓ *What to implement on the day of class*: Publish the activity instructions & post an announcement.

- ✓ *What could this look like:* Students could independently complete a short reading or watch a video, and then write/post a response. Alternatively, students could create a video or graphic to summarize key points and share with the class.

Small-Group, Semi-Synchronous Activity:

Prepare an activity for a group of 2-5 to work on together; not necessarily working at the same time.

- ✓ *What to prep now:* Set up groups & create an online workspace (Canvas, Teams, etc.) accessible to the groups. Have groups set expectations for how they will interact, the timeline for responses, group roles, etc.

- ✓ *What to implement on the day of class*: Create group-specific docs/files (as needed) to support group work. Publish the activity instructions & post an announcement.

- ✓ *What could this look like:* Reading and collectively annotating a course reading, webpage, article, lab report, or any other document using social annotation tools like Perusall or Hypothes.is. Groups could collectively brainstorm ideas using an online whiteboard or another shared workspace where they can work asynchronously or semi-synchronously.