Online Teaching - Lectures

This guide is intended to help you adapt your traditional lectures to an online-teaching environment.

One preliminary question is whether to pre-record lectures for students to view at their convenience, or stream the lectures live to students at the appointed class time. For a variety of reasons we strongly recommend the pre-recorded model, for those new to online teaching, and that is the approach we are presenting here.

The basics

Tutorial - lecture recording: the bare minimum

Add-ons

- Tutorial - integrating video or audio into your lecture
- Tutorial - cleaning up your lecture recording

Pedagogical tips

- We recommend you break the lecture into several short (10-20 minute) segments. This reduces the damage should something go wrong during recording, and presents students with a digestible package of information.

- To ensure student engagement with your pre-recorded lecture, consider scheduling an online discussion section to discuss the lecture, or pairing the lecture with a short Canvas quiz.

- If you have a student with an appropriate accommodation, you can work with UW Disability Services to arrange for your lectures to be captioned. Barring that, Panopto can create “best effort” captions automatically (information here).

Stories from the trenches

- “Don’t fuss too much about the videos. You don’t need to edit out the ‘umms’ or the postal carrier ringing the doorbell. Editing is a waste of your time right now.”
  - Rebecca Barrett-Fox, “Please do a bad job of putting your courses online.”

- “A warning: It takes a long time to rework a lecture into a recording. You can’t just lecture from your notes and hope for the best. A lot of the ‘looseness’ of my lectures – moments when I invite participation, discuss current events, or tell stories – need to be written down (or deleted!) when I lecture off a script. And the way I emphasize points has changed, too: Without real-time feedback from students’ faces, and without my standard tools of emphasis (writing on a board, waving my hands), I have needed to adapt. For instance: When I worked in an earlier business career, I learned to minimize text on PowerPoints, but now I flash brief text on slides to underscore important points. (I’m also finding out where I should have organized and signposted my lectures more clearly in the first place)”
  - Jason Petrulis, “Teaching a Large Lecture Class Remotely, due to Coronavirus,” University of Hong Kong
To ensure students are processing the lecture material, and to replace the for-credit in-class activities I had required when I lectured in person, I ask students to complete a short multiple-choice quiz after the lecture that I administer through Canvas. The questions are basic but cannot be googled; I ask about central course themes and ideas they can learn only from the lecture, and they must score 100% to get credit. I also close the quiz after two weeks to encourage students to keep up.

- Jason Petrulis, “Teaching a Large Lecture Class Remotely, due to Coronavirus,” University of Hong Kong

There is no learning without engagement, and motivating students in an online class is even more challenging than in a physical classroom. Consider giving each session a problem or inquiry focus. Ways to do this include organizing a session around a question, such as:

=> An evidentiary question: How do we know?
=> A causal question: Why?
=> A connective question: What is the connection between past and present?”

- Steven Mintz, “Transitioning to Online Teaching: A How-To Guide,” Perspectives on History

Pay attention to facial expressions. I learned a lot by watching how a few highly popular YouTubers maintained my attention. Most notably, the best video lecturers are animated in the way they speak and present their material, whether their topic is how to use scales of measurement in statistics or how to apply bronzer so it looks like a natural tan.”

- Esther C. Kim, "Live from my Living Room, It's My Classroom!" The Chronicle of Higher Education

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