

Increasing Student Engagement in the Over-Enrolled and Online Classroom

As our educational institutions push for larger and larger class sizes and more online and non-traditional options, engaging our students on a personal level becomes more and more challenging. Although eager to take advantage of online opportunities, or to be lost in the larger crowd of an over-enrolled course, our students often miss the inspiration and enthrallment with the ancient world that they otherwise experience when sufficient time and resources exist for their voices and thoughts to be heard, and when they actively participate with their professors and compatriots in the exploration of topics of genuine interest rather than being lost in the crowd.

This difficulty of personal engagement is especially problematic in over-enrolled classes where only so many can have your attention in one class period, or, in the case of online classes, where students may feel that they never get your personal attention at all. These particular challenges can be mitigated through the use of certain technological tools and resources like VoiceThread, Panopto, and other discussion and video tutorial resources available to educators. These resources, which make online classes deeply engaging, can have similar benefits for in-class sessions. Online oral and aural discussion programs like VoiceThread, for instance, not only make genuinely engaged discussion possible in online environments, but in in-class sessions enforce the involvement of *everyone* in your classes so that those so often drowned out by the more extroverted voices in the room can finally be heard. Furthermore, when some complex cultural and intellectual tasks move outside of class time into online discussions — where *all* students can take their time to respond thoughtfully and can experience the involvement of their peers and professor with *their* ideas too — more engaged, more thoughtful interactions evolve in the classroom itself.

In short, with certain tricks of grading and time-management which will be discussed during this session, the incorporation of certain techniques for online classrooms into our in-class sessions can make the time we do spend in class more exciting, profitable, and worthwhile.