

Rethinking Student Engagement and Assessment in the COVID Classroom

Issues of assessment and student engagement tend to be some of the biggest concerns for instructors transitioning into remote teaching. For graduate students especially, it can be difficult to navigate the new abundance of resources, strategies, and educational technologies as novice instructors. This workshop will focus on assisting and supporting both K-12 and university instructors in addition to graduate students with certain aspects of online teaching and learning. In particular, the goal of the workshop is to provide participants with strategies for facilitating student engagement and assessment in the online classroom. Few graduate students receive formal pedagogical training, despite desiring it. Many of the philosophies and tools presented, though designed for the digital space, will also be useful as we transition back into primarily face-to-face instruction.

Our presenters will provide an overview of the various strategies that instructors could use in order to effectively engage students and administer assessments in hybrid and online courses. Following each short presentation there will be time for participants to engage with and discuss with their peers what they have learned.

Our first presenter will address the difficulties that instructors face when attempting to facilitate and assess student engagement in the digital classroom. The need to expand what is counted as acceptable participation beyond speaking up in class (whether in person or in a synchronous online session) will be emphasized, and several synchronous and asynchronous small- and large-group discussion strategies will be suggested. Participants will then take part in a demonstration of one of the proposed discussion strategies, and brainstorm in small groups how they might implement those strategies in their own courses.

Our second presenter will tackle the issue of assessment in the digital space, starting with key issues related to online assessment (e.g., backwards design, affordances and limitations of digital pedagogy) followed by a walkthrough of alternative forms of assessment for both language and civilization courses. Participants will then collaborate in small groups to design their own alternative assessments.

At the end of the workshop, if there is time remaining, there will be an opportunity for participants to share the past successes, challenges, and hopes for future online courses that they discussed in their small groups with the large group. A list of resources that may be helpful for anyone who is interested in further researching the engagement and assessment strategies offered by the presenters will also be available.