

A WHOLE NEW WORLD: TEN LESSONS FOR MOVING COURSES ONLINE

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ABSTRACT

In this essay I concentrate on a distinct aspect of teaching courses online postpandemic: concrete steps both to ease workload burden and to increase student learning efficacy. There are ten lessons that can facilitate moving instruction online:

1. *Organize the Course in Weekly Modules*
2. *Communicate on a Regular Schedule*
3. *Post Key Lectures*
4. *Implement Discussions*
5. *Provide Frequent Feedback*
6. *Solicit Student Feedback*
7. *Reconsider Deadlines*
8. *Use Online Assessments*
9. *Experiment and Learn from Others*
10. *Proactively Seek Administrative Support*

I applied these lessons to a specific course: Public Speaking. Traditionally based on face-to-face presentations, the ability to move this course online bodes well for adapting all instruction to the requirements of online learning.

Keywords: *online education, asynchronous learning*

INTRODUCTION

In teaching persuasion, we often discuss with our students the difficulty of changing minds. People are conservative and set in their ways. Institutions of higher education move slowly, and bureaucracies established to ensure sound policies contribute to a glacial rate of change. However, crises can force change. The COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 resulted in the mass migration of courses online at all education levels. Most classes met in real time, synchronously. Asynchronous courses, though, are better suited to meeting the real-world time demands of students, amplified by the circumstances of the pandemic requiring students to balance work and family and classes. The variable demands of students interact with the variable demands of substantive course work to mandate flexibility and creativity in tailoring online education.

Teaching online presented an unexpected opportunity, an immense learning curve, and an increased workload. In this article I focus on concrete steps to ease workload burdens and increase student learning in teaching online courses. I apply these lessons to public speaking: a course not typically suited to online instruction given its requirements of presenting to audiences in person.

Prior to the pandemic necessitating a paradigm shift, public speaking had begun to move online as a result of both student demand and technological advancements. Research questions addressed desirability, feasibility, and adapting learning objectives and outcomes. One comprehensive review is offered by Ward (2016). Consistently, the most pressing objection concerns the effect of removing live presentations. Options include requiring physical audience members for presentations and synchronous public speaking requirements. The setting for speeches is a second variable, with some

deeming personal spaces including living rooms and bedrooms inappropriate for public speaking. The composition of the audience affects a speaker's experience of communication apprehension and online presentations may not adequately reflect the nerves of presenting before a live audience of relative strangers. A special issue of the *Journal of Educators Online* in 2018 focused on instructional strategies for teaching online (Mandernach & Dailey-Hebert, 2018).

Morreale, Thorpe, and Ward (2019) integrate the learning requirements of online instruction with the opportunities afforded by technology. They note the advantage of discussion forums in reducing speech anxiety and the use of synchronous presentations to peers to promote student-to-student feedback. Students then use asynchronous recordings to submit speeches to their instructors. The importance of nonverbal communication in online presentations, including eye contact, gestures, and the surrounding environment, is highlighted. This latter focus on the distinct demands of online communication is an essential component to consider in adapting public speaking courses. Additional skills, including learning how to upload speeches and PowerPoint presentations, setting-up and coordinating online Zoom meetings, and sharing documents via Office or Google are all skills increasingly essential in careers. These communication skills are applicable to all courses and careers.

THE 2020 PANDEMIC AND ONLINE INSTRUCTION

A crisis is a terrible thing to waste. This maxim, combined with Thomas Kuhn's exploration of paradigm change (2012), in a large measure accounts for the opportunities presented by the pandemic for online public speaking instruction. The unimaginable became mandatory and public speaking became an online course. In the rush to adapt in March 2020, most institutions shifted in-class instruction to synchronous instruction online. Circumstances dictated logistics. Replacing the classroom with the Zoom room seemed to require minimal change. Students and faculty were available at scheduled class times, and live lectures and activities could be transferred online. Yet synchronous classes pose difficulties that asynchronous classes overcome. These include connectivity issues and student scheduling. Asynchronous classes

provide flexibility in both viewing and completing assignments. Hybrid classes, combining face-to-face instruction and asynchronous instruction, can provide the best of both worlds.

Returning to the classroom was welcomed by most, yet at the same time students appreciated the flexibility provided by online class options. During the pandemic, many faculty developed a wealth of online class material. In my public speaking courses, I used media clips previously shown during class as the basis for online discussions. When I returned to the classroom I returned in a hybrid format, with 50 minute, face-to-face classes offered two days per week and an online asynchronous meeting one day a week. The biggest hesitation in moving public speaking online may be the presentation of speeches, which necessitates moving from in-person delivery to live synchronous or recorded asynchronous delivery. Yet we live in a new world often conducted on Zoom. In this medium, online presentations proliferated. Thus, we should consider the opportunities presented by online communication. Conducive to real-world applications, online components of public speaking may complement, rather than replace, in-person applications.

In addition to media clips of speeches and speakers, class discussions, testing, and student presentations can be moved online. Teaching is an art that benefits from an instructor's knowledge, empathy, talent, and creativity. Technology adds both opportunities and challenges. Flexibility, including a willingness to experiment, reaps educational benefits for both students and faculty. Successful online education requires an emphasis on particular elements of instruction. Clarity of assignments, a precise schedule, a reasonable workload, and frequent reminders are all essential to student learning. Sharing best practices can help alleviate the steep learning curve often accompanying technology. In this spirit of collaboration, the following are ten lessons that can facilitate moving courses online.

1. Organize the Course in Weekly Modules
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ORGANIZE THE COURSE IN WEEKLY MODULES

When we organize our courses, we frequently use weeks as our standard operating mode. Syllabi are based on the time schedule mandated by the institution's semester dates. Yet we have choices in how to organize our courses. Often a course is arranged by topics. For example, in public speaking we may break the class into types of speeches, typically informative speaking, persuasive speaking, and epideictic speaking. This is how I organized my classes prior to the pandemic. Moving online, I continued this arrangement. Each module consisted of multiple weeks, and was subdivided into readings, handouts, lectures, and assignments. Dates were clearly marked in the syllabus and in online Canvas modules. To me, the course progression was logical and assignments and due dates were clear. As faculty, however, we must continuously consider the students' perspectives. What may be perfectly understandable to us may not be to our students. It is their first contact with the course, and they possess individual levels of familiarity with higher education based on semester standing, family background, and level of maturity. At the same time, there are also subjective expectations regarding student performance. Should students receive frequent reminders? What level of responsibility from students should we expect? Should we provide leniency regarding deadlines dependent on student circumstances? In short, are we too soft if we accommodate students or are we too strict if we impose rigorous policies in the expectation that students must learn to meet the demands of the real world?

During the pandemic absolute deadlines diminished (Kuimelis, 2022). The circumstances of the pandemic highlighted out-of-class burdens affecting coursework completion, conditions that may have been present prepandemic but were considered irrelevant to deadline pressures. Distinguishing between absolute deadlines and soft deadlines is also more reflective of real-world circumstances. I refer to this distinction in my classes as hard vs. soft deadlines. Time-sensitive

assignments, especially speeches in-class, have inflexible deadlines. Yet I give my students one pass, with a small point incentive to not use the pass. The speech can be delivered during the following class period with no penalty. Soft deadlines are not affected by class time pressures, and representative assignments include small-stakes essays and proposals for speeches with the primary intent to provide feedback. The perennial question remains how to encourage students to complete work in a timely manner and progress through the course rather than enabling procrastinators who sow the seeds of educational failure. It is a similar question to requiring attendance. Good students tend to come to class, and therefore requiring attendance improves the attendance, and thus performance, of poorer students. The hybrid class, with key lectures posted online, allows students to keep up with coursework online when they do miss class.

The art of teaching includes adapting to students and to their circumstances. Understanding their needs results from their performance in our classes as well as from their questions as classes progress through the semester. Common questions and issues often reflect confusion that course modifications can address. Communicating these changes as they occur is imperative and should occur through multiple modes of notification, including course announcements and emails. Soliciting student feedback is an effective method for systematically assessing course issues.

As one example, a student recommended through midsemester feedback to organize my public speaking course by weeks rather than units. I did so the following semester, using Week 1, Week 2, etc. In that class's midsemester feedback, a student proposed adding specific dates, enabling easier recognition of due dates, which I did immediately. Student suggestions often result from their experiences in their other classes, becoming an informal sharing of best practices. Suggestions I received this semester that I plan to implement during my next semester of teaching include placing all information relating to an individual speech in one location and denoting extra credit assignments in a different colored font or by some other means. Organizational tactics can be simple and therefore relatively easy to implement. Like many faculty, I participated in numerous workshops focusing on

moving courses online. Some of these included elaborate graphics requiring knowledge of web design. While beneficial, the pedagogical imperatives of clear assignments and due dates can be achieved through simple organizational techniques. Below is an example of one week's schedule for a four-week summer course in Canvas. Readings, handouts, lectures, discussions, and assignment categories are clearly delineated.

Having due dates enables the calendar function in the course management system, Canvas. Plus, a clear and consistent organization scheme can be complemented by regular course communications.

COMMUNICATE ON A REGULAR SCHEDULE

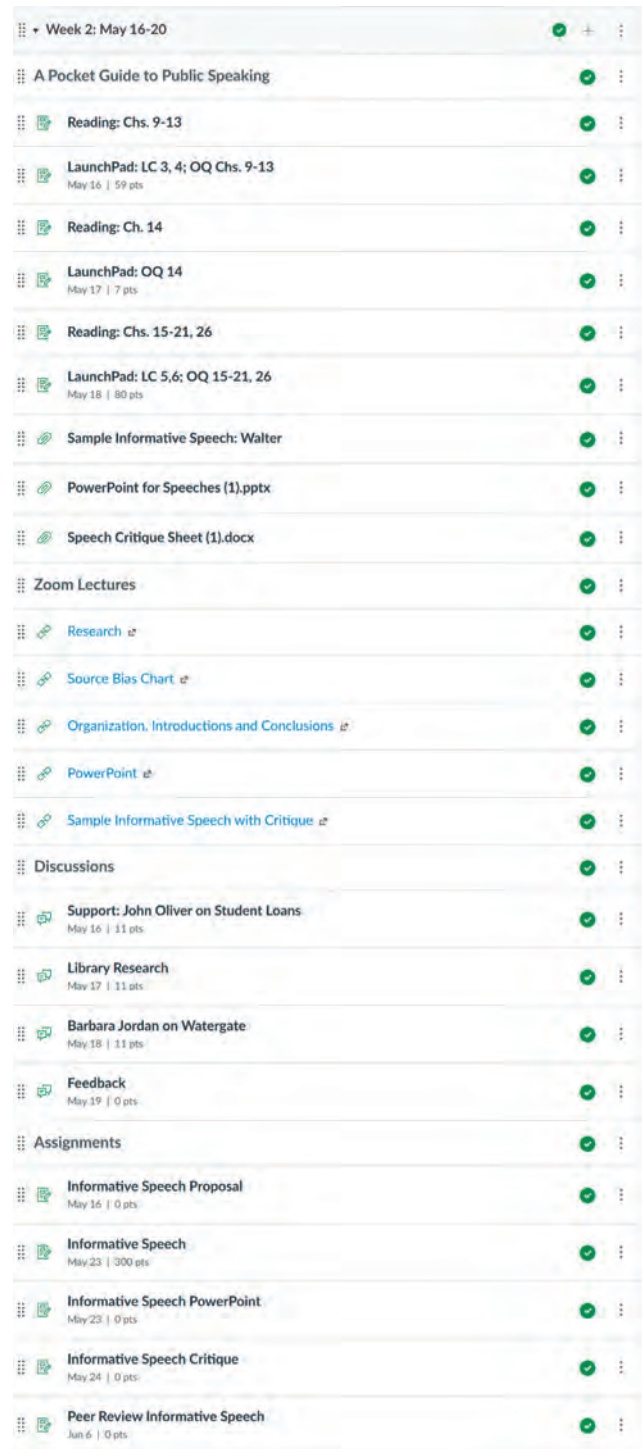
Frequent communication with students enhances teaching and increases the chances for student success. In an online course systematic communication helps guide students, providing a mechanism to communicate both updates and due dates usually provided in an in-person class through beginning- and end-of-class announcements. The system of regular communication I developed was one of the most frequent positive comments I received in end of the semester feedback.

I began each week with a Monday email reminding students of important due dates and the assignments for the week. I ended each week with a Friday email reiterating due dates and assignments and previewing the upcoming week. I also used emails to contact students who had missing assignments. In each course I had a space for questions in course information. Students, however, used private emails more frequently than this course posting. But email they did, and frequently. I responded promptly. If a question was common, I provided an answer for the entire class. I began communicating one week prior to the course start date to allow students to peruse course information, acquire the book, and even start coursework early. Below is the email I sent on Friday, halfway through a four-week May semester course:

*We have reached the end of Week 2.
Halfway through the course!*

Today your first formal speech, the Informative Speech, is due. Remember that you have until Monday at 11 am to submit. Need recorded speech with PowerPoint. Helpful Canvas tools. Submit

Figure 1.
Canvas Module



under Assignments. Videos available on how to upload recording and how to record with PowerPoint. Can also record speech and submit PowerPoint separately.

Sample speech on Canvas as well as sample speech critiqued with rubric. I do check my email on weekends if you have any questions as you are writing your speech. In addition to peer reviews of classmates for extra credit you can also critique your speech for up to 10 extra credit points. Form and Dropbox in Canvas Week 2.

Remember to complete the 3 discussions due each week for attendance points. This week's discussions include an additional topic to provide me with feedback on the course for extra credit.

Next week we begin the Persuasive speech. You will be working in groups to help select persuasive topics. If you go to people in the course you will find your group. Then go to Discussions and post. Your persuasive speech is an individual speech with PowerPoint on a topic of your choosing. Brainstorming in groups is a very effective way to select topics, and therefore you have this opportunity to work in groups to come up with good individual speech topics.

The Persuasive speech assignment has two components. The first is the individual speech with PowerPoint (300 points). The second is a short paper on working in groups (100 points). Because we don't have an extensive period for you to work in groups and the book does not have a detailed section on group communication, I wanted to provide an opportunity to both work in groups and to learn and think about group communication. I didn't want you to have to rely on a group for your persuasive speech grade but I wanted you to have the opportunity to work in groups. I will post lectures describing the assignment in more detail next week.

Next week's assignment:

- Reading: Chs. 23 and 24, *Online Quizzes 23 and 24. Learning Curve 8.*

- *Persuasive Speech proposal: May 24 (10 extra credit points).*
- *Discussions: Oliver on vaccines, Group communication, Productive Zoom meetings.*
- *Group Discussion (in people in Canvas): Brainstorming on persuasive speech topics.*
- *Persuasive Speech with PowerPoint: Friday (have until Tuesday at 11, Monday is Memorial Day).*

After the due date for the Informative Speech, and once you upload your speech, I will assign peer reviews. You can peer review any classmate, up to 4 at 5 extra credit points each (20 points total possible).

In sum, focus on your Informative Speech this weekend. Only need to upload recording of speech with PowerPoint. Separate Dropbox for PowerPoint provided only if you don't include PowerPoint with speech video. Remember the opportunity for extra credit with peer review and your critique of your speech.

While the information was all posted on Canvas in the weekly modules, this email provided both helpful reminders and a summary of the previous week and upcoming week's assignments.

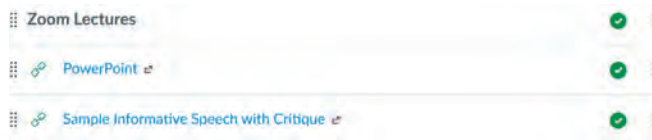
Regular communication and a systematic schedule are recommended by Cross and Polk (2018) to reduce the burdens associated with online teaching. Recommended practices include establishing office hours, communicating norms regarding grading timeframes, and scheduling time frames to respond to students. The temptation to be on-call 24/7 is a prescription for burnout.

POST KEY LECTURES

One advantage of an online course is the ability to view course information not only at a student's convenience but also multiple times. For this reason, in my hybrid courses I post key lectures. Even though I have discussed the material with students in a face-to-face format, I select information that might bear repeating. This includes descriptions of speeches and assignments. In an asynchronous course, all lectures would be posted online.

Figure 2.

Online Lectures



In the above example, the first topic, PowerPoint, I have discussed in class. The second topic, a sample Informative speech with my critique, is new material. In class, we view additional student speeches that form the basis for class discussion. Recorded lectures need not be new for the semester. Thus, when recording lectures for asynchronous courses it is a good idea not to make them time sensitive. While faculty do not want to fall into the stereotype of the professor lecturing from yellowed notes, and updating lectures periodically is recommended, posting lectures from previous semesters that remain timely provides access to information for students while saving instructor time.

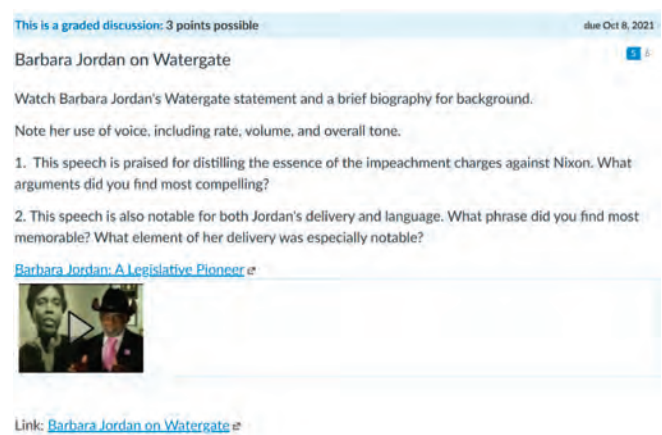
A key advantage of posting lectures is that students can review assignments and students who miss class can keep on track.

IMPLEMENT DISCUSSIONS

Discussions are vital for student interaction. In essence, they replace in-class discussions. In addition, they can be used for peer reviews. There are benefits to online discussions over face-to-face discussions because of the nature of online communication. Students that may not contribute in class due to reticence are more likely to contribute online. At the same time, it is less likely that a few students will monopolize discussions. In communication classes, discussions are ideal for showing media clips and generating comments. In public speaking, for example, I show both famous speakers and speeches, interesting and exemplary speeches, and models of student speeches. Ted Talks (<https://www.ted.com>) are a productive forum to pull discussions from, though it is essential to maintain quality control through assessing the credibility of speakers and the merit of substantive content. As one example, I consistently use Barbara Jordan's Watergate speech to both illustrate excellent delivery, most notably control of voice, and excellent language, which we return to at the end of the semester in studying stylistic devices.

Figure 3.

Discussion



Instructors should think about guidelines for discussions and for comments on discussions. I provide minimal feedback to students with a focus on clarification and recognition of exemplary contributions. I require students to post one original comment prior to commenting on classmates' contributions. A word of caution regarding time requirements for both students and instructors. At first, in a completely online class I replaced every class day with a discussion assignment. Students found this overwhelming. As a response to their feedback, I reconsidered the number of discussions assigned. Discussions also can require a lot of work for the instructor, who must read and comment and grade discussions.

PROVIDE FREQUENT FEEDBACK

I found I began each workday providing feedback to students. It was a good way to ease into the day, and this checking for questions, responding to discussions, and then grading assignments also revealed students' progress in the class. I was able to discover common issues that I could address for the whole class, either via a class email or a recorded minilecture.

Feedback on assignments is important in all instructional modes, but especially vital in online courses. I provided students with opportunities for feedback in all stages of assignments. Proposals for speeches earned course credit, to encourage completion, and allowed feedback on topics, sources, and organizational patterns. Students also received credit for reviewing and critiquing their own speeches. Using rubrics to grade speeches clarified expectations for students, facilitated consistency

in grading, and minimized the time needed to grade. Speech rubrics provided categories, with points allotted to each component of speaking, for example Introductions, Conclusions, Support, and Delivery. Rubrics allowed for weighted grading of categories and clear demarcation of good practices and mistakes to avoid. During classes we evaluate student speeches using these rubrics. Since implementing rubrics with clear grading categories and weights, I have not had students question their grades.

Most helpful, perhaps, is the brief video I record for each student providing an overall assessment of strengths and weaknesses.

Students consistently positively comment on the video feedback I provide. In an online course, this individualized feedback is immensely helpful for personalizing the course.

Rios, Elliot, and Mandernach (2018) discuss specific strategies for providing student feedback

for maximizing student course satisfaction. They recommend multiple modes of communication, including audio and video feedback, and clear guidance, including rubrics to increase student engagement.

SOLICIT STUDENT FEEDBACK

In my face-to-face classes, my hybrid classes, and my online classes I solicit feedback from students halfway through the semester. I summarize the results for students and explain adjustments I can make during the current semester, adjustments I can implement in future semesters, and rationales for policies that are critiqued but that will remain. As mentioned above in course organization, students have provided valuable suggestions that I have implemented. In public speaking, after the first major speech, I asked students to answer the following questions in a course discussion.

Midsemester Student Feedback:

1. *What is going well in this course? What do you want me to keep doing?*
2. *How can I improve this course? What would you add or change?*

Table 1.

Grading Rubric

Informative Speech Evaluation

Name:

Time:

CATEGORY	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor	Points
Time	4:00–5:15 20	3:30–3:59/5:16–5:45 17	3:00–3:29/5:45–6:15 15	2:30–2:59, 6:16–6:45 13	>2:30, <6:45 10	20
Introduction	Specific and memorable gain attention Topic important to audience Clear and well-phrased thesis Specific preview with signposts 30	Specific gain attention Topic relevant for audience Clear thesis Specific preview with clear main points 25	General gain attention General introduction to topic Thesis evident Preview 22	Announcement of topic, Topic not related to audience, Thesis worded vaguely, Preview not clear 19	Functions of Introduction lacking: Failed to gain attention, Topic not relevant, Thesis not clear, Missing preview 15	30
Organization	Clear main points with parallel phrasing Connectives used well Clear subpoints Strategic choice of organizational pattern 30	Clear main points Clear subpoints Connectives used for most points 25	Main points clear Subpoints clear Connectives not used consistently 22	Main Points clear Subpoints not clear Failure to use oral connectives 19	Organization confusing with no clear main points or subpoints 15	30
Conclusion	Signals End Extended summary that emphasizes key points Final thought that is memorable 30	Signals End Extended summary Final thought 25	Summary present with clear main points Final thought 22	Summary present but main points not clear General final thought 19	Fails to provide summary or final thought 15	30

3. *Would you change anything about how you prepared for the Informative Speech? What most surprised you about presenting the speech?*

Select student responses follow:

1. *The daily quizzes are nice. Also, I like how you give us handouts and examples of how speeches should be.*
2. *Change how many launch pad assignments are due at once. Sometimes we have 1 or 2 due at the same time, and sometimes we have 5 due at the same time.*
3. *I would have put more time into my conclusion and spent more time finding more info on Jane Goodall's contributions.*
4. *I was surprised how easy it was to present my speech without having my whole speech written out and a lot of info on my PowerPoint.*
5. *I think the discussions are going well for this course. They help me to better myself and to improve different things.*
6. *One thing I would change would be perhaps mentioning at the end of class as to which part of the study guide, we are going to cover in the next class or next week. I feel this would help us to improve our learning because we would remember where to look next.*
7. *I would've maybe practiced more to be more prepared, but that is personally on me. However, I was surprised about how I was more comfortable this time than the first speech we did. I can remember from the introduction speech I was so shaky and nervous, and I did not feel as uncomfortable. Yes, I was still slightly nervous, but I could feel personal improvement.*

Responding to this feedback, I explained the schedule for the LaunchPad assignments. LaunchPad is a publisher-provided study aid (now

MacMillan Achieve) that I use for its Learning Curve reviews and online quizzes. While in the past I recommended due dates for LaunchPad, I used to extend the final deadline until the last day of class. While allowing flexibility, it also encourages procrastinators, and completing these assignments at the last minute is not optimal for learning. This semester I allowed two extra weeks for completion of LaunchPad assignments, allowing timely completion and flexibility.

End of the semester feedback through Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness also provides valuable suggestions. Some feedback from my most recent semester is below. The first section is a response to the prompt "What aspects of this course helped you learn?"

Here is some Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness feedback:

- The videos we watched on certain famous people's speeches. And having hard deadlines for speeches to turn in. And her videos with commentary, that was really appreciated.
- The launch pad assignments as well as the video lectures helped me learn the most.
- I thought the recorded lectures were extremely helpful and prepared me for the assignments. I also really liked the personal feedback given for assignments.

The second prompt was "What changes to this course could improve your learning?"

- Power point slides explaining the topics.
- The course is short, but has a lot of work involved. I think that limiting discussions specifically would have given me a chance to get work done in a more timely fashion. Professor Conti was well aware of the time restraints for the class and was understanding.
- There are no changes to this course I can think of to improve my learning. Because it is asynchronous, it really depends on what the student does to improve their learning.

The number of discussions remains an item to consider, and this was my first short summer course with discussions. I required three per week, for a total of 12. I began to use PowerPoint with lectures in this course as a response to midsemester

feedback. And with a four-week course, even though some students missed deadlines they managed to complete the work in this short time frame.

CONSIDER DEADLINES

During the pandemic, many faculty became more flexible with deadlines in response to difficulties in students' circumstances, who often carried increased responsibilities. In addition, moving classes online also allowed for increased flexibility for some assignments. The nature of the class may impose limits in an in-person class constrained by class time. Public speaking is a perfect example. Class size is typically limited to both allow for the grading workload and the time required to present speeches in the classroom. While workload issues remain, and exponentially increased during the pandemic as faculty worked to move courses online, the time consideration is eliminated in asynchronous courses.

As classes return to face-to-face the results of flexible deadlines are worth considering. Again, the nature of the class affects decisions. Public speaking in a classroom requires deadlines for the course to progress in a timely fashion. Students must simply present in their scheduled time frame. Online, time constraints present their own distinct issues. Falling behind is a constant danger for procrastinators. For the bulk of my teaching career, I imposed strict deadlines. At the start of the pandemic as my courses moved online, I allowed extensions on a case-by-case basis. I imposed minimal penalties as I continued to teach online and in my return to hybrid teaching with a face-to-face component. In my most recent summer class I imposed no penalties, though in a four-week course the dangers of falling behind are minimized.

In short, faculty should consider the nature of the course, the inclination of their students, and the circumstances in which they teach when considering deadlines. Some students may benefit from deadlines as it forces them to complete work on time and stay on schedule. Some courses may require deadlines as the subject matter builds on itself and if work is not completed students fall irreversibly behind. The format of the course affects flexibility. In-person performances and work, such as speeches and labs, require adherence to time constraints and the resultant deadlines.

In-person public speaking classes require adherence to deadlines. Falling too far behind with speeches interferences with progression of class material. I maximized the penalty for late speeches at 20% of the grade and moved these late presentations online. I did not have an issue with students taking the penalty to avoid in-person speeches, although this could be a result. In addition, I gave all students the option of uploading their last speech, and almost all students chose this option. I also continued to offer a safety-valve for one-time use: the Pass.

The Pass

You may pass on one speaking day. The speech is due the next class period. If you do not use your pass, you will receive 10 extra credit points on the final speech.

Most students use the pass because they are not prepared on their speaking day and speak the following class period. This eliminates the need to consider excuses. I explain that circumstances may dictate use of the pass, such as sleeping in or a car that doesn't start. I also explain that illness is an excused absence not requiring a pass on a speaking day. This follows our institution's policy of not requiring excuses for class absences if not for extended periods. The pass policy has worked to minimize weighing excuses on speaking days.

USE ONLINE ASSESSMENTS

Similar to deadlines, the pandemic forced instructors to consider their assessment options. In online education, frequent, low-stakes testing is recommended. Although there are options for monitoring students to discourage cheating, this usually incurs additional expenses. More importantly, many students are uncomfortable with monitoring, and it increases their already heightened nervousness regarding examinations.

Online assessment presents many options. Publishers may provide software packages including review of material and testing. Prior to the pandemic, I had implemented MacMillan's LaunchPad program with Learning Curves (providing review of material) and Online Quizzes. In public speaking, these replaced quizzes I had given on the Informative Speech, the Persuasive Speech, and the Speech of Tribute. Online options that promote student interaction with course material are

productive no matter the relation to course grade. In Organizational Communication and Media and Society I replaced unit exams with weekly quizzes. Student perception of the fairness of testing methods is important and thus explanation is helpful and framing of exam options is critical. At first, I called weekly online tests exams, and students commented that the testing burden was excessive. When I called the same testing quizzes, this complaint disappeared.

The fundamental concern is encouraging honesty in test taking. Open-book testing is one option. This is the method I used, and I was surprised to find that the exam results were similar to in-class, no notes, exam taking. Attention must be paid to how questions are constructed to promote comprehension of class material and minimize mere memorization and regurgitation of facts—question types to avoid in any circumstances. While I was comfortable using the online testing material provided by the publisher of the class texts I used when the intent was review of material, I preferred writing my own exam questions for graded assessments with heavier weighting towards the final grade. I have solicited and used questions written by students on exams, especially useful when teaching a newer course without an extensive text bank of questions. There is the potential that students may have others take their quizzes. Some basic integrity and ethics and trust is important in education, and I have thought that adding a few in-class tests may provide a measure of consistency to disallow use of stand-ins.

A separate consideration is the format for student presentations, with options including in-class, synchronous online, or asynchronous online. Speakers' tendencies to use more, rather than fewer, notes are heightened in an online format. The ability to record presentations multiple times until satisfied is a benefit of recorded formats. With several semesters of online public speaking presentations experience, I have found that there is a greater reliance on notes than in a face-to-face class. Surprisingly, the presentations do not seem to be more polished, leading me to believe that students are not taking advantage of the ability to rerecord until satisfied, or perhaps they are just satisfied to complete the speech. Presenting online, as work continues in an online format and meetings remain online to a great extent, is a skill that will

continue to be useful. In a hybrid course I have combined in-person and online recorded presentations as options for individual speeches. I fully expect my online assessment options will evolve with the course and with technology and as a result of responding to student feedback.

EXPERIMENT AND LEARN FROM OTHERS

Continually adapting one's courses is a sound principle for any level and any mode of instruction. Forced to change by the pandemic, positive outcomes resulted. Reconsidering course material and instruction is time consuming and adds to a workload that also includes in most cases research and service. While some colleges and universities adjusted tenure and evaluation expectations to reflect the increased teaching workloads of the pandemic, these allowances will probably not continue. Wholesale course corrections are not necessary to improve and adapt teaching; flexibility and experimentation and innovation can result from incremental changes.

These principles of learning and adaptation apply to any course. Adopting best practices is a time-honored practice. Sources of inspiration include students and colleagues. Students, often more adept with technology, are frequent sources of innovations. As I mentioned before, I have adjusted course organization and patterns of communication in response to student feedback. One assignment that is constantly evolving is the group communication assignment. In my most recent course, a four-week online public speaking class, I dropped the requirement of coordinating speeches presented on a single topic that I used since the onset of the assignment. In four weeks online, it was simply too much to require students to coordinate topics in the one-week span of the assignment. To replace the ongoing group communication efforts available in a longer course, I substituted four readings on group communication, in which students selected two articles to summarize. There were two group assignments: brainstorming to select topics and critiquing each other's speeches. These were not graded, and perhaps as a result participation was minimal. Despite this drawback, this alteration necessitated by circumstance is worth continuing. Not requiring the coordination of topics eliminates the burden of dealing with shirkers, although admittedly a

real-world occurrence. Adding course readings in group communication enhances course content. In addition to enhanced course reading, brainstorming, and critiquing, scaffolding assignments can provide opportunities for group work and increase the chances for student success. For all speeches, having students critique through peer review parts of speeches, such as introductions, choices of main points, or a main point with support, can improve performance. These presentation components can be uploaded or conducted in class. In this manner, learning how to provide and perhaps most importantly, receive constructive feedback through critical commentary is a valuable skill that will last long after the class ends.

I have been teaching for longer than most of my students have been alive, and my course has evolved with the times and with technology. I have gone from requiring typed outlines of speeches to requiring PowerPoints to accompany speeches. I have become more flexible with deadlines and implemented grading through rubrics. What has not changed is my enthusiasm for the classroom and the start of a new semester and a round of new students. Teaching public speaking has become more difficult in our partisan atmosphere, yet this heightens the importance of teaching the elements of persuasion including finding common ground, establishing the reliability of sources, and adapting to the audience. Approaching change with a positive attitude lessens its burden and increases receptiveness to opportunities.

PROACTIVELY SEEK ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Department heads, deans, provosts, and even chancellors are all guided by the same mission as faculty, a missive sometimes overused as a platitude, but true nonetheless: student success. In some institutions faculty own the curriculum: They are in charge of course content, delivery, and requirements for majors. In larger institutions faculty may be constrained by predetermined course formats or texts, yet there remains considerable instructor flexibility according to individual teaching styles and through adapting to the needs of individual students.

Course release time or compensation may be granted for new course development or innovation, for example adapting to technological demands. Policies developed prior to the onset of online

education, often adapted in a piecemeal fashion, may unnecessarily constrain online learning. There may be restrictions on student enrollment in residential as opposed to online courses. There may be government guidelines, as in the case of financial aid, in requirements for residential student enrollment. Willingness to undergo the strain of adaptation is a necessary step for innovation in online education. Registrars and department heads are especially helpful partners in understanding policy requirements, working to guide change and providing necessary resources. Budgetary constraints may constrain course options. In a multicampus system, such as Penn State, online courses increase the potential for course enrollments between campuses. Online formats, asynchronous and hybrid, also enhance the ability of students to schedule courses.

Perhaps most critically, consult your campus' Instructional Design Specialist to help design courses and to address technical issues at the outset. Hours spent attempting to fix a problem on your own can be eliminated through consulting an expert. Penn State recently introduced a new course designation for hybrid instruction, and consultation with the campus' Instructional Designer is required for course approval.

With the sudden and massive migration of courses online at the outset of the pandemic in March 2020, panic did not ensue, technology worked, we all learned the methods of Zoom, and education continued. Professional development opportunities increased en masse, with workshops providing education focusing on online teaching. Even so, Kastner (2020) found that a lack of professional development opportunities has hindered the effectiveness of online instruction. A massive learning curve confronted most faculty, and for many faculty research productivity decreased and burnout increased.

Openness to innovation and the ability to change varies with individual faculty members, administrators, and the policies of the institution. The adage that it is better to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission is not especially applicable to education, where policies exist to safeguard both student and faculty interests. Administrative support for course enhancements including provision of time releases for course development, professional development workshops,

and faculty networking within and across disciplines all increase the likelihood of success in innovating online.

CONCLUSION

There is a difference between teaching online and teaching face-to-face. Most faculty prefer in-person classes because it facilitates interaction with students, a reality that drew many to teaching as a profession. Students increasingly prefer the flexibility provided by online course options as they balance work, school, family, and other responsibilities. The biggest drawback for faculty in online teaching is the massive learning curve, both in learning technological requirements and adapting course assignments. Sharing best practices is one way to minimize this burden while increasing the likelihood of success. Techniques enhancing online education also benefit in-person learning, including soliciting and adapting to student feedback and continuously innovating. Techniques exclusive to online education, including uploading presentations and online assessments, also inspire us to reconsider our traditional teaching methods. Change can be inspiring and energizing despite the time requirements entailed, and our receptiveness to learning how to adapt our courses can also serve to remind us that learning is a continual process that can preserve youthful energy and prevent stagnation. Our students can both force us and help us adapt to technology, and our students and our courses will benefit from necessary and enlightened change.

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