Transitioning Your Class Online: A Teaching Survival Guide

With many Universities asking professors to transition their classes online, the Education and Training Committee at SIOP has compiled best practices and recommendations for those needing to make this transition. Teaching online is substantially different than teaching in a face-to-face classroom. As I-O Psychologists, we recognize that the competencies required to teach online effectively take time to develop. Just like Alex Brewis - President's Professor at ASU stated recently: "You can't make a great class in a week. "

Hence, this material should be thought of as a survival guide for those responding to COVID-19. In the following, we present first step recommendations for transitioning a course online, considerations for online lectures, tips on how to transition your course assignments online, enhancing online student engagement, and making sure you pay attention to your own (and student's) well-being. Much of this information is taken from our own experience and the experience of others around the web. Consequently, we'd like to make this survival guide a living document.

SIOP E&T VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS
(ALL TIME EASTERN STANDARD)

Advice for transitioning to online classes

Monday, 3/16
- 11-12p Rich Mendelson
- 3-4pm Nick Salter

Tuesday, 3/17
- 10-11am Nick Salter
- 3-4pm Dave Bracken

Wednesday, 3/18
- 11-12pm Rich Mendelson

https://clemson.zoom.us/j/936292956

If you have any additional information we should add, please fill out this short survey and we'll incorporate your recommendation!

NOTE: for additional help, join our Virtual Office Hours hosted by SIOP E&T at the dates above, accessible via this Zoom link (contact Marissa Shuffler at mshuffl@clemson.edu with any issues)

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Getting Started: First Steps for Transitioning a Course Online

Student Accessibility/Security

Before moving your material online, the first thing you should consider is whether your students will be able to access the course material. While Universities provide the resources and facilities for students to access the material in normal conditions, this may not be true for students forced to stay at home/off-campus. Consequently, the first step in transitioning your material online is to ask your students whether they will be able to access the material. We recommend creating a survey based off of [Lauren Cagle](#) and [Danya Glabau](#)'s suggestions.

Students with limited accommodations may influence your decision in putting PowerPoints/Lectures online, how much weight you place on certain class assignments, or even whether a class assignment can be accomplished online. Many Universities are implementing security protocols in accessing information stored on University Servers. Consequently, understanding your University's privacy/VPN policies is necessary to get a grasp on how your students will access this information. Your University may even provide tools that help you access material off campus. For example, the University of Central Florida allows students to remotely access applications such as AMOS, SAS, SPSS and Microsoft Office through their [UCF Apps program](#).

Pilot Test

Like with any good experiment, it is important that you pilot test your design before implementation. If your University has already decided to go online immediately, this advice is obviously too late, but it may be valuable to some of you.

1. <u>The Lecture</u>. The main functionality you should pilot test is your lecture. Many of us will continue to use the lecture/discussion based pedagogy that is best presented in a face-to-face environment. While we all know that virtuality can impede the amount of information conveyed, it is important that you test out the functionality of your video conferencing software to ensure that this lack of information transferral is *by design* rather than *by error*. It's also important to realize that what works on one system or browser may not function as well in another. So attempt to vary the conditions under which you test your lecture. A last thing you'll want to test is how you plan on distributing the lecture if you're recording it. You'll need to make sure that you a) know how to record each lecture b) know where that video is initially stored (e.g., in the cloud, on the computer, c) find a way to easily distribute the lecture. Many online educational tools (e.g., Canvas/Blackboard) have storage capacity, but you'll quickly run out of space. It might be best to use whatever cloud storage service your University uses if it is within FERPA guidelines.

2. <u>Class Assignments.</u> You will likely be utilizing your school's online education tool (e.g., Blackboard/Canvas) during this time for the majority of your class assignments. If you haven't utilized these tools before, you'll be pleased to learn that many of your class assignments (e.g., quizzes, discussions, group projects) can be facilitated or even replaced with the features native in these platforms. We explain later how to transfer common class assignment to these online platforms.

3. <u>Additional Online Tools</u>. Discussed more later, there are tools that facilitate class participation/engagement either during lecture or during off-lecture times. For example, [TurningPoint](#) can be used to take 'pulse' surveys during live lectures. Making sure you understand how these features work before you begin your foray into online teaching will likely be beneficial.

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Inform Students

Many of what is discussed here will not only require additional effort/pilot testing on your part, but also for your students. Once you've made decisions about how you're going to transition your class online, it is imperative that you inform your students as soon as possible. They will need to go through the same pilot/error testing as you will (e.g., making sure they can hear the class lecture). This can be anything from testing their microphone/video connection on video conferencing software to accessing school resources via VPN.

Lecturing Online

Transitioning your F2F lecturing style to an online environment is likely going to be your greatest challenge. In fact, it is encouraged that you *do not* change your course too much when transitioning online as 1) you likely will not have enough time to create a perfect online learning environment and 2) many online platforms allow you to mimic a F2F teaching environment. One of the primary benefits of online teaching is providing accessibility to those who may experience barriers to attending and learning from traditional lectures. Consequently, there are several resources that are already available that can help facilitate lecturing online.

Video Conferencing Tools

In their response to the COVID-19 outbreak, many Universities are making professors aware of video conferencing tools they currently have access to. Daniel Stanford at DePaul University has been compiling [a list of online teaching resources](#) available at each University. Examples of these softwares include Adobe Connect, Google Hangouts, Skype for Business, Cisco Meeting Server, WebEx, Teams, Bluejeans, and Zoom. Many Universities and Companies are holding online training sessions on these tools. For instance, Microsoft's Teams platform has [several training events coming up and an online repository of training sessions](#).

Many of these video conferencing tools include services beyond simply connecting people remotely. As [Aimi Hamraie](#) conveys, Zoom allows for the integration of apps such as [Otter](#) and [Thisten](#), which automatically transcribes your lectures - making them more accessible (*UPDATE: Zoom also has this functionality natively with the app*). Also, [BlueJeans](#) and Zoom natively support features like an interactive Whiteboard, where you type or write formulas for stat classes. It also allows for Breakout Sessions, where independent class discussion can take place for a period time, which may be incredibly important for classes with group projects. The features of these video conferencing tools varies greatly, so it is important for professors to become familiar with these tools ASAP.

Additionally, while many Universities are moving lecture classes online, they still may ask/require that staff/professors come to campus during this time. Consequently, it is important to understand the multimedia functionality of your lecture hall. Many classrooms are enabled with video cameras and microphones that professors can utilize for online lecturing - though, let's be honest here - it will be weird lecturing to an empty classroom. Further, your University's Department or Library may have access to multimedia hardware (e.g., video cameras) that can be used to stream your lectures online. In light of this, be sure to check 1) your University's policy about coming to campus, 2) the multimedia capabilities of your classroom, and 3) whether your University has the resources to check-out multimedia equipment from your department/library.

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While it may be tempting to dismiss the lecture component of your class, especially given the speed and stress associated with this transition, we encourage you not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. So much verbal and nonverbal information is lost when *you* aren't giving the lecture you designed, lessening the amount of knowledge the student may gain in your class. Additionally, your presence will act as a reassurance for your students and help them ease into this new online format.

Lecturing Via Video Conference

Lecturing online is much different than lecturing in a face-to-face environment. There are two general methods of lecturing online: Asynchronous or Synchronous. With asynchronous lecturing, you will be pre-recording your lectures and posting them online. This method holds many benefits such as increasing the ease of access for your students as well as editing the content before posting online. However, it isn't without its drawbacks. Student engagement is, by definition, not present within the lecture - limiting the amount of adjustments you can make *in-situ*. Synchronous lecturing, however, can allow for better student engagement, provide the opportunity for *in-situ* feedback/adjustments, and, frankly, is a bit more comfortable for individuals who have never taught online before. However, the students may not feel comfortable engaging in this new environment, limiting our ability to identify where there may be some confusion about the delivery of our content. Within this in mind, there are a couple of tips that can help you quickly improve your asynchronous or synchronous online lecture:

1. Treat your Asynchronous Lecture like a Podcast - What Adriane Sanders calls a *lecturecast*, this method is similar to how many organizations are treating video interviews now. The content is delivered by the instructor speaking directly to the camera. This could be a regular lecture, recapping or highlighting takeaways from the week's readings, live demoing an analysis, synthesizing or furthering content that comes up in the student discussion boards, or any other content you may otherwise deliver in a F2F environment.
2. Encourage Students to Self-Identity Before Speaking - This will make it more clear whose turn it is to speak (Aimi Hamraie)
3. Utilize Video Conference Tool Functionality - There are a couple tools that can facilitate participation in online lectures. First, most Video Conferencing Tools allow students to send in questions via chat, which they may feel more comfortable doing than interrupting a part of the lecture or speaking up in front of an online class. In fact, many of these students may be listening to your lecture in an environment where they need to keep their mic on mute, limiting their vocal participation. Second, some video conferencing tools allow participants to 'raise their hand,' which can help you control the pace of the lecture as well as facilitate participation.
4. Allocate Time for Discussion - While discussion may organically occur in face-to-face lectures, there are many barriers for collaborative discussion in an online lecture environment. It may behoove you to set aside a period of time for discussion. One way to facilitate discussion during this period of time is to encourage students to send in questions before/during class, so there will be material to scaffold when you reach your 'discussion time.'
5. Have a Back Up Plan - Technology is buggy. If your video conferencing tool fails (which it might because of the surge in utilization), it is important to have a backup plan. This could be utilizing another video conferencing platform OR switching to asynchronous lectures.

While these tips aren't comprehensive, they are quick and easy actions you can take that would immediately improve the quality of your content delivery.

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Transitioning Your Course Material to Online Environment

Beyond your lecture, you are likely going to attempt to transition many of your assignments online. Below, we briefly describe how you may do this as well as alternatives you may consider.

1. Presentations - While many of us would prefer to do synchronous (live) student presentations, this is one assignment which may need to transfer to a asynchronous format. Jenae Cohn and Beth Seltzer provide some excellent recommendations on how students can record their presentations in advance, tools for voice narration, and how they can be shared with yourself and/or the class. If you are set on synchronous presentations, many video conferencing tools will give you discretion on who can speak at a given time - Allowing for the presentation to go on uninterrupted by distractions. It is also recommended that one student is assigned to share their screen if the presentation requires a PowerPoint presentation.

2. Quizzes - Luckily, many online educational platforms (e.g., Blackboard/Canvas) allow instructors to create online quizzes or import them directly from a Word or text file. Within these platforms, you can easily transition your quizzes to an online environment without too much hassle by following their guidelines (e.g., How to Create a Quiz [Canvas]). Features in creating online quizzes may include setting availability dates (i.e., when students can see the quiz), setting deadlines (i.e., when the quiz is due), shuffling answers, time limits, whether or not (and the degree to which) students can see their responses, automatic grading, and many others.

3. Attendance - If you take attendance every class and would like to continue to do so, there are a few solutions we can recommend. First, you could do it the old-fashion way during your online lecture by asking students to indicate whether or not they are present. Second, you could have them sign in to the lecture with their name and take attendance by viewing who is in the video conference session (many Video Conference Tools have an attendee list). Third, use a software like TurningPoint to conduct pulse surveys (see below). The responses to these surveys could be used as a proxy for attendance. However, we should state that during this time students may have some additional time restrictions (e.g., in a different time-zone, caretaking responsibilities) that may prevent them from accessing your online lecture. Consequently, you may want to judge attendance by their activity on the online education platforms. However, our overall recommendation is to relax your attendance policies during this time.

4. Discussions - The fruitful discussions that come from in-person conversations can be mimicked in an online environment. Many online education platforms have features such as discussion posting or chat functions. In lieu of in-person discussions, you may 1) present a provocative question concerning the class material (e.g., should AI be used in the recruitment/selection of employees?), 2) allocate a period of time where an online discussion can take place, and 3) setting parameters regarding the number of responses each student should post. If you are utilizing the discussion feature of your online education platform, these responses will automatically be saved online; if you are using the chat feature, many of these platforms have the ability to save the chat transcript, which you can use for grading this assignment.

5. Exams - This is likely the most tricky assignment to transition online. Several articles discuss possible solutions such as online proctoring or using features like Respondus (which locks down the test takers browser). Unfortunately, neither of these are ideal solutions as privacy is a concern with the former and implementation is a challenge with the latter. Many professors in our position are a) making their exam open book, but making it harder, b) making the questions more subjective/essay based, c) replacing the exam with another assignment, or d) dropping the exam entirely (usually as a last resort). If you do put your exam online, you could mitigate the chances of cheating by making it a timed exam, randomize questions, do not allow students to go back to already answered questions, and include various formats (e.g., short answer/essay). This thread from Society for

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The Teaching of Psychology presents a variety of perspectives. Ultimately, you will need to decide which option works best for you.

6. <u>Activities & Exercises</u> - It may be tempting to get rid of activities and exercises. Things that are simple to organize and execute in person can be wrought with technical and logistical challenges online. However, there are various tools and methods to help facilitate this. Conferencing software with Breakout rooms can allow you to divide the class for small group discussions. Shared documents such as a worksheet on GoogleDrive can allow students to collaborate on an assignment together in real time. Also, some software programs such as [iDecisionGames](#) will allow you to translate your class exercises into an easy to execute online activity. With a little planning and forethought, online activities can be engaging and effective learning tools.

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Student Engagement with Online Teaching

It is often difficult to encourage student engagement in a face-to-face classroom, let alone in an online environment. Luckily, our colleagues around the globe who have been teaching online have some recommendations.

1. <u>Identifying Bugs</u> - Given the short time frame and the unreliability of online tools, it is likely that you'll make mistakes or that there will be bugs. <u>Alex Brewis</u> recommends that you leverage this weakness to your advantage. She states that you can provide extra credit points for the first student who identifies a bug or mistake. Although this is sort of like an error-based training method, it still may provide an opportunity for enhanced student engagement.

2. <u>Pulse Surveys</u> - Pulse surveys are all the rage in organizations, but they can also be used to facilitate engagement in your class rooms. Tools like <u>TurningPoint</u> and <u>Poll Everywhere</u> can be used by embedding pulse surveys into your PowerPoint lecture. Once the students have finished responding via the App, you can even put in a slide that displays the results. When used effectively, this tool is a great jumping off point for discussions.

3. <u>Interactive Discussions</u> - Having students dive into breakout sessions is a great way of facilitating interactive discussion. Many online education platforms as well as video conferencing tools allow professors to break the class into small groups for interactive discussions to occur. You could present an inquisitive/challenging question for breakout groups to discuss and, once the class is back together, have them present their opinions on these questions.

4. <u>Make Time for Your Students</u> - Oftentimes, students may feel like they cannot engage with you or the content in an online classroom environment. To overcome this barrier, it may be important to have a bit of extra availability for your students. One approach to making yourself (and your TA) more available is to offer digital office hours. As Jenae Cohn and Beth Seltzer <u>point out</u>, many of them will not feel comfortable providing personal information (e.g., cell phone), so you'll need to set up either access to online chat via your school's educational platform (e.g., Canvas, Blackboard) or video conferencing software (e.g., Zoom, BlueJeans). Some tools such as <u>Calendly</u> and <u>You Can Book Me</u> will sync with Google or Outlook Calendars and students can select preset meeting times (i.e., 15 minutes) during your office hours that will auto-populate to your calendar and send a notification to your email. This can simplify coordinating virtual office hours amongst students.

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Well-Being of Faculty and Students

Lastly, it is important for professors to realize that this is likely a stressful time for everyone involved. The dynamic and uncertain nature of the situation can feel overwhelming for both you and your students. As such, it is important that you do not ignore well-being as we navigate through this event. Below are some helpful tips on how to do this provided by a variety of sources.

1. <u>Be Kind and Considerate To Yourself and Your Students</u> - Everyone is stressed even if they are playing it cool. ([Amy Young](#))

2. <u>Support Other Faculty (Technology)</u> - Most faculty are having to retool their classes right now, some of which may be less apt/prepared to do so than you. Support your fellow colleagues by providing help when and where you can. ([Amy Young](#))

3. <u>Support Other Faculty (Teaching)</u> - Professors aren't immune to contracting this virus - neither are their loved ones. Consequently, professors may need some support with teaching responsibilities if either they get sick or their caregiving responsibilities quickly increase. Luckily, Molly Metz at the University of Toronto is compiling [a list](#) of volunteers to help those sick professors out. Sign up if you can or utilize this resource.

4. <u>Be Flexible</u> - Everything is not going to go as planned and that's okay. Flexibility, with respect to letting go of some class assignments and with student accomodations, is important to maintain your well-being. Do the best you can in the current situation. ([Betsy Barre](#))

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General Advice/Resources

This section provides a list of links to resources shared by the broader academic community, if you have additional recommendations we should add, please let us know via [this brief form](#).

[Alex Brewis' Twitter Thread](#)
[Aimi Hamraie's Blog Post on Mapping Access](#)
[Nathan Greeno's Blog Post on Inside Higher Ed](#)
[Michelle Miller's Going Online in a Hurry (Chronicle of Higher Education)](#)
[Jenae Cohn and Beth Seltzer's Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption](#)
[Daniel Stanford's Remote Teaching Resources of Business Continuity](#)
[Online Teaching Tools](#)
[Resources for Online Meetings, Classes, and Events](#)
[Society for the Teaching of Psychology Facebook Page](#)