GOING ONLINE: BASIC TIPS

USEFUL LINKS:

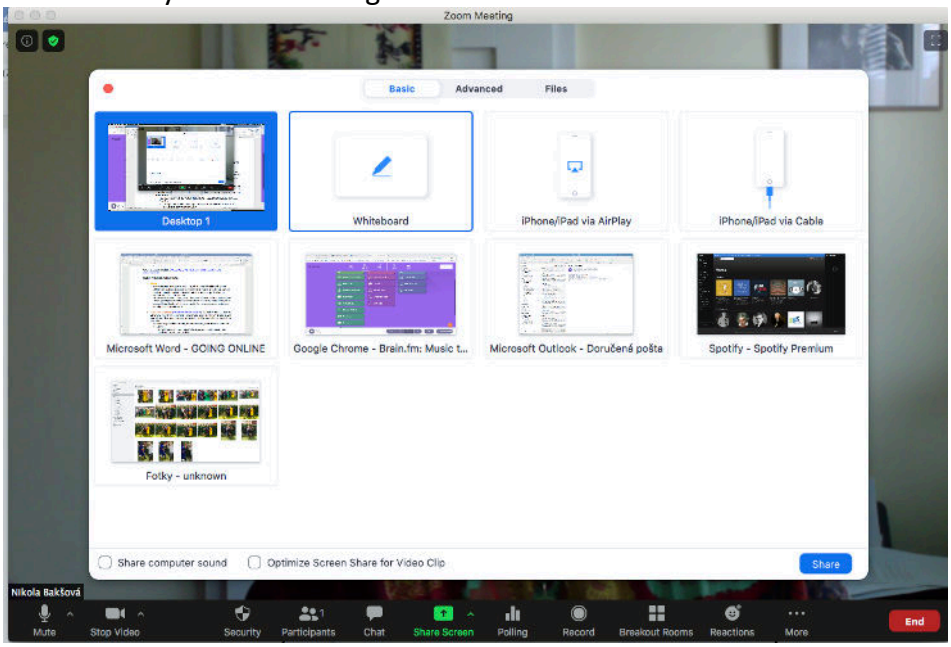
Beth McMurthrie, Oct. 7, 2020. The New Rules of Engagement, *Chronicle for Higher Education,* https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-new-rules-of-engagement
Tony Bates: Advice to those about to teach online because of the corona virus
Tony Bates: Book (PDF) Teaching in a Digital Age (guide for effective teaching using online technology—especially Chapters 3 and 4)

The Chronicle for Higher Education: Moving Online Now—resource material

Global Liberal Arts Alliance: Going Online Fast: Resources to help you move your instruction online

BASIC TIPS FOR ENGAGING ONLINE:

1. **ZOOM**
   - Our courses are running through ZOOM, which you are familiar with by now. ZOOM is not a direct replacement of face-to-face interaction, but it has features that can make the class time more interactive and, most importantly, help students stay focused throughout.



   - **Share Screen** function allows you to either share what you are looking at on your screen (perhaps a short video, or a data chart on a website). It also allows you to share a **White Board** – which you can use for typing as you would a whiteboard or a flipchart in the classroom. You can also **connect your phone** via cable and use it as a mobile camera (for example if you prefer to hand draw something, or want to share text from a book or piece of paper)
   - **Breakout rooms** are another crucial feature in ZOOM. As the first article in this document points out, maintaining attention and making students feel connected

to a class are challenging tasks online. Breakout rooms help tremendously in increasing direct participation of the students. You can divide students into small groups (you can choose the size of the group and whether you want to place them in different groups manually, or let ZOOM divide them randomly) to work on a task together during the class. When you close breakout rooms, students will be brought back into the main classroom and can go over what they covered in small groups.

- **POLLS:** there is also a possibility to run quick polls (single or multiple choice questions) in ZOOM to either check understanding of some topic, or to find out an opinion on a topic quickly (and bring all on board).

2. **GOOGLE CLASSROOM** (see simple instruction video)**.** We have a BISLA G-Suites for Education, and "classrooms" set up for every BISLA course within.

   It is like a very simplified Moodle, has a modern easy to use interface. Some GC functions:

   - Handy **Stream** at the home page—where you can post announcements, include resources to read or view.
   - **Assignments** – where you can assign tasks with a deadline (everyone sees the deadline at the home page then).
   - **FEEDBACK**- the best feature about the Google Classroom is that you can enter your feedback on student assignments right into them online, and students will find it there. They can also respond there to your comments or ask further questions. They are also able to improve their assignment incorporating your feedback for you to review again.
   - **Students can also upload** not only their assignments, but also resources they like to share to the classroom Stream

3. **COLLABORATIVE READING: PERUSALL** is an excellent online platform where you can upload your own texts in PDF or Word and it allows the students to read collaboratively (click for a quick guide).

   a. In Perusall, you or students can pose questions (e.g. if they don't understand a passage or a concept), they can post reflections, comment on other students' reflections.

      i. For example, when I upload a text, I disperse several questions throughout the text (by highlighting a passage and typing a comment) and I ask students to have at least 7 different "interactions" with the text—which can mean responding to my question, posing their own, or writing a reflection on a different part of the text, or responding to their classmate's note or question.

   b. **Perusall will produce a report for you about the most discussed terms**—which is a great start for an online conversation afterwards

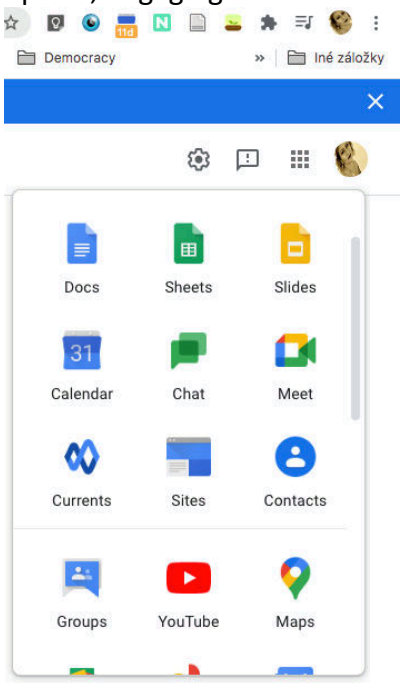
   c. Perusall increases the likelihood that everyone has read the text from the usual 20-30% (of course this percentage is higher at BISLA) to over 90%, on average!

4. Try to define what you do in class at a higher, **more goal-oriented** level (e.g., presentation of content, checking for understanding, collaborative project work instead of just saying "lecture," "quiz,""discussion"). If you keep those goals in mind, you will have a better idea of how to achieve them online, as well as what aspects of the in-class experience you ought to focus on simulating.
5. **Review the assignments for the class for the next few weeks:** even if your class assignments stay the same, remind students what they have to do and in what format – many get confused by the switch to online interaction and may lose track or assume the "old" assignments no longer apply. If there are changes, or additional assignment, it is doubly important to clarify them for the students and posting them either on Moodle or Google Classroom, where they can always find them.
   Also, **clarify the format of interaction** for your class for the upcoming weeks, so that students can know what to expect (more readings and reflections, online discussions, blogs, group assignments, etc.**)**

6. **Keep lectures short**
   If you are interacting online via ZOOM, do not lecture for more than 20 minutes at a time. Attention span is much shorter when the interaction is online.
   You can record your short lecture (even just on a cell phone) and post a video (on Google Classroom stream, or email it to the class) and then use ZOOM for discussion …or simply make sure not to go into longer monologues when online—people tune out online much faster. After 20 minutes, it is good to change the format—use either breakout rooms, poll, pose a question for discussion or a problem for solving, etc.

7. **Engage students into interaction**
   Ask students to contribute their presentations online
   - **a.** Students are well used by now to sharing their presentations online, including sharing their screens with their colleagues;
   - **b.** Ask students to **send a handout** for their classmates beforehand or post it on Google Classroom so that it is easier for all to follow;
   - **c.** Ask the presenter **to have a few questions** for their colleagues
     - **i.** Consider following up a presentation with short written interactions (e.g. through forum format below)
     - **ii.** Consider appointing an "opponent" to presentations – i.e. when the presenter shares their presentation with their opponent ahead of time and the opponent challenges the presenter with questions or points of critique.
8. **FORUM: Post questions online and have students interact (following a presentation, text, video clip…)**

a. you can use the google **CHAT**—which allows students to not only post their reflection to your question, but also react to others' posts, engaging in a conversation.
b. In this format, I usually require students to post one reflection and one reaction minimum.
c. You can simply create a chat room and share a link to it on Google Classroom.



9. **Give assignments that will have the students work <u>in pairs or small groups</u>**
   a. It is very often more effective if the online interaction happens in smaller groups rather than with the entire class. Two or three students can have a group chat together and then report back to class.
   b. In **pairs**, students can read each other's assignments (reflections, essays, answers to prompts) and reflect on them via skype, give each other feedback, raise further questions (it is then good to follow-up with a brief written reflection on that skype interaction)
   c. I sometimes use a format of **groups of three**-especially if I know they will have a few interactions of this sort. Each time, students have a different role:
      i. ***Interviewer****:* Interviewer prepares, after engaging with the required reading or video or other material, a set of questions that stem from that reading. They send it to the interviewee ahead of time (at least a day or two)
      ii. ***Interviewee****:* In a small Skype (or equivalent) chat, interviewee offers their answer to the interviewer's questions, offering own analysis and reflection
      iii. ***Observer****:* Observer observers this interaction, taking notes on both interviewer's questions and the interviewee's answers
      iv. *DISCUSSION:* After Interviewee's answers, all three should engage in further discussion, raising other questions, points or examples
      v. *REFLECTION:* Each person writes a reflection on this interaction from their position, summarizing what was said. Interviewer evaluates whether the answers given meet their anticipated answers, add own reflections, interviewees evaluate whether the questions matched their own questions regarding the material and offer their answers, observers reflect on both the questions and answers given from their outsider's perspective. All reflect also on what their

Use the ZOOM conversations then to go over these experiences, soliciting observations based on the group or pair exercises, reflections, or collaborative reading. That is what these platforms are best suited for.

10. **Hold more office hours/consultations—**ZOOM can also be used for consultations. Let students know when you are available for 1-2 hours, initiate a video session and send them a link to join online—and whoever wishes to join in those two hours to discuss assignment or get feedback, can find you there with that link. That way, even if you spend less time together as a whole class, students can get interaction and improve their understanding in another way. Sometimes, you may wish to just schedule a smaller session if you know a particular student is unlikely to seek you out on their own but could benefit from direct feedback.

11. **Watch students' workload**

12. It is actually very easy to overdo it with class assignments when going online. Small written reflections, group chats, online blogs and interactions…all can balloon to a larger workload than under normal circumstances. Please be mindful that, while being creative and engaging a multitude of formats, it does not become overbearing. Estimate how much time each assignment might take (for a 30 minute conversation, add 10 minutes for set-up and clarification), if there are follow-up written reflections, that adds another 30-60 minutes, etc. It seems to work well to treat all small assignments as a future material for online discussion—thus engaging with the studied topics in depth and interactively.

Of course, there are so many more ways to engage with students, and you will find a wealth of links in the links at the very top. I would also appreciate, if you email me with your own best practices—and I will share what seems to work best with all of our colleagues.

May the force be with you! See you on the other side of this pandemic.