Building Community in the Zoom Classroom

Develop Activities for Pre-class Engagement (Asynchronous)
- Provide opportunities (e.g. Q& A created in discussion board, examples provided in YellowDig) for students to ask questions about the learning materials.
- Offer low-stakes/ungraded discussion questions to prepare students for more advanced, in-depth synchronous discussions. Place students in pairs, triads, small groups to create collaborative responses to the discussion questions. Post goals and plan of live class before live meetings so students know what's expected and can prepare accordingly.
- Record a brief ppt or post image/graph, illustration pertaining to readings in Bb, VoiceThread and invite students to comment.

Course Design
- Set up Blackboard course with clear structure to help students navigate the pre-class activities and access the live meeting information.
- Use breakout rooms: Plan learning activities that benefit for small-group interactions as they provide opportunities for shy, reticent students to engage with the content and peers.
- Assign roles to the groups, e.g., recorder, reporter and indicate the expected product of the groupwork: What will students be accountable for and how will they share their work?
- Break your longer assignments into shorter pieces to help keep students engaged, on track, and benefitting from your ongoing feedback. Many students find it challenging to manage their time and workload and thus may defer working on a long assignment until a few days before the due date.
- Make all assignments due at the same time each week (e.g. 11:59 PM on Sunday) to provide consistency and help students keep up with timelines.
- Provide explicit guidelines on live participation expectations to support/advance students' learning (e.g. Participation Guide for Online Discussion - synchronous, graduate-level course).
- Co-create the guidelines for live participation with students so they take ownership in their learning process and understand the rational for the guidelines.
- Live class sessions provide personalized, supportive, collaborative opportunities for student feedback and improvement of their work. For example, paired peer reviews of each other's work based on criteria followed by sharing of what they learned, what they will continue to revise and how. Also provides live forum to share work in progress and receive informed, timely, actionable feedback.

Faculty
- Meet at scheduled times. Log in early in Zoom class to touch base with students.
- Utilize, share, and practice video conference etiquette with the students; this process helps establish norms/guidelines for how we will work together to conduct inclusive, respectful, professional Zoom meetings.
- Check in with students, see how they are doing in the continuation of COVID-19: e.g., How are you doing today? (thumbs up, down, even).

Faculty cont.

- Encourage students to turn their video on as seeing each other increases sense of belonging and community. Provide students with links to virtual backgrounds to equalize the virtual environment. Link to Villanova Zoom backgrounds. Answer questions received from asynchronous channel and clarify misunderstandings.
- Integrate active learning opportunities in live sessions such as problem-solving, case discussion, study questions, reflection prompts, short presentations followed by facilitated discussion.
- Reach out to students who are struggling, offer support, connect them with pertinent academic services, such as Learning Support Services, Tutoring, CASA, Counseling Center.
- Hold virtual office hours with students or groups of students to learn about their interests, backgrounds, motivations for the course, and provide learning support and guidance.

Pedagogically Appropriate Use of Zoom Features
- Utilize breakout rooms to put students into small groups and then bring groups back together.
- Screen share your materials when necessary and/or ask students to screen share.
- Ask students to use the "chat" function on Zoom to share questions, observations, examples and be sure to set aside time to address them. Designate one-two students to read the questions from the chat or to group them according to theme.
- Generate input/feedback using polls; may be especially helpful for determining students' background knowledge, attitudes, experiences, values as it generates non-identifiable data and allows for observation/discussion of trends and pre- and post-discussion analysis.
- Use the annotation feature in Zoom to engage students with content. Annotation invites students to contribute to a graph, contribute steps in problem-solving, identify aspects of images, find keywords in readings.

References:

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