Small Teaching Online
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Part 1: Designing for Learning

Chapter 1: Surfacing Backward Design

- **Focus first on the most essential goals you have for your students.** Everything else in the course should stem from these goals. Forget about the content until you've decided what you really want students to learn.

- Assign tasks that foster self-reflection on learning as it related to the course learning objectives.

- **Remind students about the "big picture"** of the course and how the content relates to that big picture. Why are you asking students to do what you are asking them to do? What is the overall purpose of the course?

- **Online teachers need to work harder to ensure that students see the purposes that underlie the activities they are undertaking.**

- **Busy online students tend to skip any task for which they are not held accountable.** Students may not read your assignment feedback. Implement low-stake assessments that require students to complete these tasks.

- Have students complete an assignment related to their final big project or assessment, in week one. This sets them up for success by starting with the end. It also prevents students from stumbling across a major assessment they were not expecting.
    - Can also have a **syllabus quiz**

- At the end of the semester, have students reflect on how far they have come.

- Think about **how you will know that students achieved your course objectives**. It is essential to measure students' achievement of those objectives to determine whether they attained them.

- Think about what students will need in order to succeed on your assessments.

- At the beginning of each online module, provide a short, written description that introduces the module's content, describes what students will be doing, and explains why they are doing it. Can also make a video.

- **Students more likely to click on a video than read text.** If providing videos, should include captions to accommodate all students (Universal Design for Learning)

- Create assignment instructions and clear directions for how students can accomplish them successfully
    - *Here's what I want you to do: Here's why I want you to do it: Here's how to do it*
    - Can provide assignment checklists, rubrics, exemplars etc.

- Require students to review learning objectives at various points of the class. Ex. which ones have they accomplished, what progress has been made on the others, what do they need to do to continue learning in this area? etc.

- At end of course, have students reflect on how far they have come, and list 3 most important things they learned from the course.

Chapter 2: Guiding Learning Through Engagement

- Multiple, low-stakes assignments support learning better than a single summative one.
- Students find activities more meaningful when they include multistep engagement and receive feedback at each stage (from instructor or peers).
    - Students who find an assessment meaningful are more likely to work hard on it, learn from it, and complete it successfully.
- Create several mini-assignments that become the cumulative assessment in the class. Provide feedback on each.

- Create conditional release assignments that guide students' learning, let them know whether they've mastered course concepts, and help students discover connections between class activities. Done through mastery paths function on Canvas: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-26266; https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-26563-how-do-i-manage-new-features-for-a-course)

    - Ask students to submit an end-of-module written or recorded summary of key concepts before they can access the next module.
    - Have students complete a quiz on your video mini-lecture before they can access the next segment of your mini-lecture series.

- **Seek out cues that indicate students may be confused.** Pay attention to trends in student submissions that show misunderstanding or miscommunication. **Create an announcement, video, or e-mail to class to clarify these misunderstandings.**

- **Post summaries of each module's discussion forums.** Point out what's important and what needs paying attention to.

    - This emphasizes key points, increases motivation by calling out individuals with exemplary posts, serves as a study guide, and ensures students don't miss important information
    - People love to see their contributions publicly recognized and praised. **Reward good work on discussion boards** and identify posts that went above and beyond expectations.
    - Students highly value faculty interaction in online forums
    - Responding to students' posts more than once per week can encourage critical thinking in online classes.

- Add a question and answer discussion forum for students to ask questions on course content/activities

Chapter 3: Using Media and Technology Tools

- Online class videos should be no longer than **6 minutes**

- **Informal videos** lead to **greater student engagement** than highly produced videos

- Can provide guiding questions that students have to answer while viewing a mini-lecture or have a post mini-lecture quiz that they need to complete
    - Include feedback built into the quizzes to enrich student understanding
        - Ex. direct student to review a section of a video or read a page in a text book

- Adding images, visuals, and audio that are not directly related to content can overwhelm and confuse learners

- Avoid overwhelming students with new technology that they need to learn

Part 2: Teaching Humans

Chapter 4: Building Community

- **It is crucial that students work in collaboration with peers and instructors in order to achieve their full cognitive potential**
    - Have students post a written or video introduction of themselves and comment on that of 2 other peers.
    - Can ask them to include 2 or 3 goals they have for the course or describe what they already know about the subject

- **Require students to post their own submission before they can read and comment on other's posts**
    - Set two deadlines, one for posting and one for replying

- Allow students to enrol in group discussion topics that they are most interested in exploring

- Be present and made sure your students know it, on a very regular basis (**Note:** key is regular, not length of time, can be short check ins of 10 min a day)
    - Establish a regular routine for when you will post or provide feedback
    - Post your typical turnaround times on your syllabus

- **Create a "meet your instructor" section** of your online class. Post a photo of yourself or make a video with a brief biography that summarizes your academic background, research interests, and personal hobbies and pursuits
    - **Can reuse for other classes**

- **Allow students flexibility.** Examples:
    - Opportunities to revise and resubmit assignments
    - Drop lowest quiz/assignment grade
    - Provide tokens for late submissions ex. 2 late submissions up to 5 days allowed, no questions asked
        - Use column in Canvas grade-book for TA's to track use of tokens
        - Offer extra credit to students who do not use any tokens

Chapter 5: Giving Feedback

- **Feedback is most helpful when it is targeted and timely.** Make sure students receive feedback on assignment before submitting next assignment of a similar type.
  - ○ **Include strengths of what the students did well and specific ideas for how to improve next time.**
  - ○ **Use informative rubrics for grading** that allow students to understand their progress and what level they are at. Use Canvas rubrics for quick and easy grading for TAs.
  - ○ **Consider giving comments using audio or video instead of text.** Can say more in a short audio clip and intonation and body language helps students better understand your comments. Can also save you time.
  - ○ Can record a screen capture as you go through a student's paper.
- Consider renaming online office hours to "Happy Hours", "Coffee Breaks" "Consultations", These have been shown to increase attendance as they sound more welcoming.

Chapter 6: Fostering Student Persistence and Success

- **Send personalized e-mails to students** who did not do well on an assignment. Express your willingness to help them and ask guiding questions such as "Did you participate in the discussions?" Did you watch the mini lecture etc." End on a positive note (ex. since it's still early in the semester, now is the time to try to figure out what went wrong and how we can fix it)
  - ○ A personalized e-mail from you has significant potential to help a student who needs a little extra attention
- **Mastery quizzes**
  - ○ Can assign vocabulary quiz for each module and student has to obtain 100% before they can proceed with the next module. Allow unlimited attempts.
- **Learning contracts** (Have students check off on a list of statements to agree to)
  - ○ I have read and understood the syllabus
  - ○ I can and should post questions to the Q & A discussion board
  - ○ I will attend office hours if I fall behind etc.
- **Goal Contracts**
  - ○ Have students identify two goals, one challenge in achieving those goals, and one strategy for overcoming that challenge
- **Scaffold assignments**
  - ○ When people achieve success on a task, their belief in their ability to succeed increases
    - ▪ Offer frequent opportunities for students to succeed in low-stakes tasks as they work toward more complex and higher-stakes ones.

Part 3: Motivating Online Students (and Instructors)

- Students must take ownership for their learning in order to succeed in an online class.

- Giving students more control or at least perception of control can lead to increased motivation to engage with you, your material, and the other students in the class.

- When both parties in the online learning partnership are highly motivated, an energizing atmosphere results in which deep, meaningful learning takes place.

Chapter 7: Creating Autonomy

- When students feel like they have some ability to control or have a say in the process of completing their work, they are more likely to find that work meaningful.
    - Can give students control by allowing them choices in activities and topics

- **Students are more likely to pursue work when they are investigating questions that interest them than ones that you have set for them.**

- **Specifications grading**

    - **Refuse to accept work that is below par.** Require students to meet all basic criteria in order for a mark to be granted. (all or nothing grading)
        - Ex. 1 mark or 0 for a discussion post. Makes your grading simpler and faster
        - Prevents students from skating by with minimal effort in the course
        - Expect and require only the highest-quality work, refuse to accept junk effort

Chapter 8: Making Connections

- For students to learn something deeply, they must make connections both internal (across the course content) and external (from the course content to the students' experiences)

- New learners have trouble seeing how all of the different elements of a field of knowledge hang together

- **Encouraging students to make connections between science course material and their lives promotes both interest and performance for students with low success expectancies.**
    - Has no impact on students with high expectations for success in the course

- Have students create concept maps at various points to help them demonstrate connections that are forming in their own minds.
    - Good way to summarize connections within a module, at the end of a module
    - Can also be used to demonstrate understanding of how ideas from modules connect together

- Have students located relevant new stories or other content and share in discussion posts

- Have students write Lifelong Learning Journal entries each week that describe actions they are taking to expand their network or knowledge
    - Ex. attending IFT/BCFT/CIFST webinar or networking event, attending FNH grad seminar, reading a recently published article in Journal of Food Science, checking out various websites, reaching out to someone on linked in